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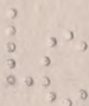


JOAN BEGAN HER UKULELE LESSONS

Frontispiece

JOAN'S CALIFORNIA SUMMER

BY
CAROLINE E. JACOBS
AND
LUCY M. BLANCHARD



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Joan began her ukulele lessons . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i> ✓
"Jingle bells, Jingle bells, Jingle all the way." . . .	<i>Facing page 38</i> ✓
It was such fun to watch them as they splashed about . . .	" " 84 ✓
Tom arranged them carefully on the immense back. . . .	" " 190 ✓

JOAN'S CALIFORNIA SUMMER

CHAPTER I

THE NUTTING-PARTY

JACK came back from the Golden Age of the ancients with a jerk, as one venturesome bandit bee buzzed too near his forehead. Joan stood over by the woodbine that scrambled up the side of the veranda, her eyes thoughtful as she gazed out at the distant hills, soft and mellow in the haze of autumn.

October days at Hillview were the most perfect of the year, the twins thought. Out in the garden the wealth of mid-summer roses had given way to deeper hued asters and chrysanthemums, the gypsy flowers of Fall. There was a touch of frost in the air, and the maple leaves on the splendid old trees at the edge of the lawn were beginning to change into deep russets and gold. Beyond the road, sloped fields aglow with golden rod. At midday it was still almost summer-

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like, although the evenings made one appreciate the fires of hemlock knots in the old fireplaces.

Jack looked quizzically at his twin. He was a slender, studious boy of sixteen. The crutch at his side told better than words could why he was usually to be found with a book, while other boys of his age went in for outdoor sports.

"'In maiden meditation, fancy free'?" he asked, teasingly.

With a little sigh of content, Joan came back to the present. She perched herself on the arm of the green willow porch chair at Jack's side, one foot swinging slowly back and forth.

"No, you dear old twin," she said, comfortably, "only thinking, Jack, what a perfectly splendiferous time we all have had since we came to live here with Cousin John, and he isn't tired of us yet. Isn't it wonderful to-day? That blue haze on the hills makes one think of the smoke from Indian fires, doesn't it?"

"October's the most gratifying season of the year," piped up nine-year-old Bob, unexpectedly. Under Tony's direction he had been industriously covering over the flower beds at the side of the porch steps. But as Jack deftly fired a pine needle cushion at his head, he shouldered his rake and dashed discreetly around the side of the house.

Theo sat at the little writing desk just inside the long French window of the library, writing letters for her mother. At the sound of beating hoofs along the drive she glanced up.

"There's Helen and Scott, Joan. Just look at the glorious leaves they've found."

Joan hurried down the steps to meet them.

"Oh, we've had a bully canter, way over the hills," Helen exclaimed as she slipped from the saddle. "We did wish you were with us. Don't you dare drop those oak leaves, Scott."

Scott laughed and twisted a spray of scarlet woodbine around Joan's head as he passed by her, his arms laden with great branches of plunder that they had stripped from the forest trees.

"Voilà!" he cried. "We crowned the Queen of autumn. Say, Jack, the chestnut burrs are opening and the ground is just thick with hickory nuts. How about a nutting party?"

"Before the weather breaks," warned Joan, "or the squirrels will get them all. How would Saturday do?"

"Now what mischief is afoot?" Theo glanced out of the window, with a smile and nod at Helen.

"Nothing more dreadful than a wood picnic before the nuts go. We can't stop because it's al-

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most time for dinner. Scott wanted to divide the spoils with you. We'll be over to-morrow sure, and settle the plans."

Joan watched them as they remounted and galloped down the drive. Their companionship had been so much to both her and Jack, ever since their coming North, and suddenly her twin gave a low whistle.

"Great Jehosaphat! Joan, Saturday's Bob's birthday. We almost forgot. It's the twenty-ninth."

Joan laughed.

"That must be why he said, it's the most gratifying season of the year. But he'd love the nutting party, Jack. You know Margie's birthday came first, and he always says that we make more of a fuss over the girls' birthdays, than we do over the boys' in the family."

Jack nodded.

"We don't want to forget the fishing rod. It's been in his dreams for weeks. I've got a bully magnifying glass for him too, and I think Mumsey's planning on a kodak." He stopped short.

Around the corner of the house came Bob, one arm thrown around Margie's shoulders in close consultation as befitted the arch conspirators of the house of Clayton. At Jack's call he

promptly climbed over the veranda rail, and perched there like an attentive brownie.

"We've got a surprise for you, young man. You too, Margie. Now, go ahead and guess."

Bob meditated, cautiously, remembering the time when he was sure Jack had a popgun concealed behind his back, and it had turned out to be a first volume in a series on American heroes.

"Books," he said, tentatively.

"Candy," Margie suggested, hopefully. She loved chocolates, and seldom had a chance to indulge thoroughly therein.

"Wrong, both of you," laughed Joan. "Nothing to eat and nothing to read, but it's going to happen next Saturday."

Bob beamed, expectantly.

"Has it—has it—er anything to do with my birthday?"

"It just has, old boy; we've just been planning a wood picnic as a celebration to a pixie. Does that please you?"

Bob's face became one broad smile.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"Up to the chestnut grove. Helen and Scott say the ground is thick with the nuts even now. If there's a good frost to-morrow night, or to-night, it will open all the burrs."

"We'd better take plenty to eat, though,"

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warned Bob. "Don't you say so, Snipwinkle?"

"Lemon tarts and raisin cookies," Margie said, sagely.

"And let's take some apples and potatoes to roast. We can build a fire on the rocks and put them in the ashes," suggested Joan.

"Well, far be it from me to crush any of your gypsying habits and customs," called Theo's clear voice, "but if I were you, I'd put in plenty of fried chicken and sandwiches. I can't bear smudgy, smoky half baked potatoes and apples on a picnic."

"And lots of doughnuts," added Bob; "the kind with holes in them."

Joan had been jotting down the different items on the margin of Jack's scratch pad.

"I reckon Marm Dilsey will have all she can do to get up this luncheon, but she won't mind as long as it's for Bob's birthday. Hurry up, both of you now, and get ready for dinner."

Saturday morning, Bob was up at daybreak, scanning the horizon for signs of rain.

"Many happy returns of the day, laddie," Mrs. Clayton said, as he ran into the breakfast room. His eyes were shining and his cheeks rosy with excitement. He had really taken special pains with his hair that morning.

"Oh, Mumsey," he cried, "I'm a whole year

older than I was yesterday." His arms tightened around her neck in a loving cub bear hug, and suddenly his eyes lighted on a slender parcel, standing up against his chair. "Jiminy," he cried, "what's this?" and read aloud from the little card tied to the string. "Happy birthday wishes from Jack and Joan."

The knots proved obstinate and Bob cut them impatiently. Inside there lay a full fishing outfit.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "what made you all think of such a thing? I just can't 'magine."

Joan smiled over at Jack, remembering the frequent and palpable hints that had been dropped by the young man for six weeks previous.

"Oh, we just had a sort of feeling it might please you," she answered.

Margie was examining the outfit with the greatest interest.

"Don't forget you promised to take me fishing."

"Well, girls can't fish, but 'course, I'll show you," Bob responded, magnanimously. "That is, if you'll promise not to talk and scare away the fish."

Just then Tony appeared in the doorway, looking very important and mysterious.

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"Marse Bob, dere's some one out heah mighty anxious to see you. You better come out dis minit."

"Wants to see me?" repeated Bob.

"I think we'd all better go," said Joan, happily, as she slipped her arm through Mr. Porter's, and the whole family followed Bob as he rushed from the room.

Tied to the hitching post was the most rakish and glossiest of black ponies. From the arch of its neck to the long sweep of its tail, it was a gift that any boy might be proud of.

"Oh, Cousin John," exclaimed Bob, scarcely believing his eyes. "Is he all mine?"

He threw his arms around the silky neck, his face pressed against the pony's nose. Margie eyed him critically, and held out a lump of sugar.

"He's most as pretty as Waddy," she commented. The pony gave a low whinny of pleasure and nibbled at the sugar.

"What are you going to call him, Bob?"

"Why not name him Alcibiades?" suggested Jack. "He was a Greek dandy, you know, and Alcy for short wouldn't be half bad."

"I like Rob Roy," said Joan, stroking the white nose, affectionately.

"No, sir, I'm going to call him Prince," said

Bob, flatly. "I don't care if it is old fashioned. He looks like a prince. Maybe I'll call him Black Prince."

As Bob rode his new treasure up and down the long bridle path, Jack watched him from the veranda, a curious look in his eyes.

"What is it, lad?" asked Mrs. Clayton in the willow chair beside him.

Jack gave a half sigh, and slipped his arm around her shoulder.

"I'm glad you've got one whole boy, Mumsey," he said, remembering his own lameness. "Bob has certainly improved a lot, lately. He doesn't stutter nearly as much and hasn't tried to be pompous and use long words. He hasn't had to learn a verb for ever so long. I'm awfully glad he got the pony."

Uncle Phil appeared around the side of the house laden with parcels and baskets of every description.

"Hyar y'are, hyar's de luncheon all ready for you'uns to take to de picnic."

"Yes, and you'd better be getting ready," called Theo. "Scott and Helen are to be here at nine."

It was a keen disappointment to Bob when his mother said she felt the exertion was a little too much for her.

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"But I can help you enjoy the nuts at home just the same," she told him. "You can roast some of the chestnuts, Bobbie, by my fire, and Theo and Joan can make nut fudge, so I'll have my party to-night."

Somehow it always seemed that the Mater made things right.

As Tony drove out with the light spring wagon a funny little head appeared around the side of the arbor watching them wistfully. It was Violet Isabella, brown as a chocolate drop, her curly little black horns of hair bound around with white strips of cloth, and a wider grin than usual on her eager face.

"Tony," called Joan, "there'll be room for Violet with you, and she can help serve lunch."

Not waiting for any further invitation, Violet Isabella shouted the good news to Marm Dilsey, and clambered up beside Tony. As they passed Jefferson cottage, Aunt Johnny came out with a box of plum cake in her hands of her own special cooking.

"Have a good time, my dears," she called, lifting her smiling, sightless face, as though she could see every happy youngster. "Good-by, good-by."

Up the winding road they went, the fields on either hand filled with waiting harvest of golden

pumpkins and big red apples. Even the brook that gurgled along rampantly in the summer time like a runaway gypsy seemed different now, reflecting the vivid autumn foliage in its tranquil depths.

Joan and Scott rode slowly a little behind the rest. Very becoming the brown riding habit was and the cantering start had brought a flush of color and a sparkle to Joan's eyes.

They rode on in silence until, making the last turn the picnic ground came in sight. It was a group of woods cupped in the rising hills.

"Just look," cried Joan, pointing with her whip to the crests of the chestnut trees. "They are like a golden crown."

Bob was already out of the saddle.

"Look at them," he shouted. "We're just in time." Everywhere were squirrels scampering up the tree trunks, bounding from limb to limb, scolding and chattering at the intruders on their territory. Under the trees, the ground was strewn with chestnut burrs.

"Why, they're not a bit afraid," Joan said. "Just look at that little rascal sitting on his haunches, eating under our very noses."

"I presume they are protected by law here, just as they are in Richmond. That's probably why they are so tame."

Just then the two puppies, Scrub and Grub, came hurtling through the dry leaves, half tumbling over each other, and the squirrels dashed out of their way. They did not venture down again, but scolded incessantly, as if saying, "Don't you dare take them all, leave some for us."

One dropped a nut that hit Margie on her forehead, and Bob told her, he was sure it had done it on purpose, just like the apes throw coconuts at their enemies.

Violet Isabella had never been to a real picnic before, and rambled around the woods with excited curiosity. She suddenly appeared with the information:

"Dere's some folksees got lost down der road hyar in one of these bubble wagons. Dey's fearful flustered."

Jack and Joan hurried after her and found just around the bend of the road a big red touring car. The man was lying on his back tinkering at the engine, while his wife and little girl were picking wild flowers along the edge of the woodland. Jack offered his services eagerly, and the owner of the car sat up with a look of distinct relief on his face. They had started out that morning for a long pleasure trip, he said, and had run out of gasoline. There had been a leak, and

they could not go on until they got a fresh supply.

"We'll send Tony over with the wagon to get some for you," offered Joan, eagerly. "We're having a picnic in the woods. My uncle is Mr. Porter. Perhaps you know him."

"We've got lots of fried chicken and sandwiches," urged Jack, boyishly.

At the mention of fried chicken, little Jean's eyes sparkled, and the twins led their new guests back in triumph.

Scott had helped Tony build a fire of twigs and dry leaves. Potatoes and apples were roasting in the ashes, and Theo was preparing coffee in her own special style while Helen spread the cloth.

"Everything's ready," she announced, placing a great bunch of golden rod in a glass fruit jar, "table decorations, salad à la Waldorf Astoria. Doesn't it look pretty, Theo? Wonder where Joan and Jack are? It couldn't have been a real accident or we would have heard screams."

"Here they come," exclaimed Mr. Porter. "Why I believe that's Kent Osgood."

"We found some friends of yours a little way down the road," called Joan, merrily. "Tony has to go for gasoline, while we have luncheon."

Mr. Porter gave them a warm welcome, and

Theo set three extra places around the spread cloth. A picnic lunch is always novel. There is the delight of eating out of doors, and the little thrilly feeling as you feel yourself surrounded by all the wild things of the forest. In the interlacing branches overhead, the shafts of sunlight steal and dance coquettishly in spots over the white linen. There comes the far away call of birds, and even the occasional spider or ant trotting inquisitively around the feast fails to rouse you.

"I'm hungry enough to chew tacks," Jack exclaimed. "These baked potatoes are splendid, Helen."

Violet Isabella did a triumphal march bearing the birthday cake to the place in front of Bob. Marm Dilsey had outshone herself. It was a wonderful cake, thick with white frosting, and had a garland of tiny pink bowknots, with "Robert Clayton" raised in pink frosting on top. Bob cut the cake himself, taking care to avoid the ten candles.

"I shall never forget the surprise we had today," laughed Mrs. Osgood. "Just think of being stranded in the heart of the hills and finding fried chicken and birthday cake awaiting you."

"We shall all look forward to many happy times together," her husband added, smiling as

Margie slipped a package of cookies into little Jean's hand. "You certainly have ministered to the babes in the woods."

Bob cleared his throat with dignity.

"It's been a 'ccommodation to us, sir. You see we don't often have visitors on a picnic on my birthday."

Jack cuffed him affectionately.

"Duffer. You never had a birthday picnic before."

After their guests had gone, the two boys went with Bob to try the new fishing rod, and even Mr. Porter slipped away to join them. The girls gathered nuts until they tired of it, and their baskets were full. The sun was beginning to slip down behind the distant pines, and Helen set to work gathering things together. When the boys came up, Bob looked a little crestfallen.

"We would have caught fish if there had been any, but there wasn't anything but bullfrogs."

As they rode slowly homeward, Scott and Helen were plotting together. Every Christmas their aunt Caroline invited them to spend a week with her at a house party in the Catskills.

"And I'm going to ask her to invite the Claytons this year. Oh, Scott, wouldn't Joan's eyes grow big if she could only see our Catskill snow-drifts! I'm going to write and ask mother what

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she thinks. Oh, dear, I wish she wasn't way off there in California."

"Home again," called Joan, as they came to the last turn in the road.

Mrs. Clayton was watching for them at the window, and Margie and Bob rushed up to her room.

"It's been the loveliest birthday, Mumsey," Margie cried. "What do you 'spose; Bob caught a whole real live bullfrog with his fishing rod."

Mrs. Porter laughed happily, her hand rumpling up Bob's hair.

"Better a bullfrog than nothing at all, laddie," she said, and that night Bob dreamt that a giant bullfrog was standing by his bedside holding out a birthday cake, while Joan in the guise of a fairy godmother was lighting the candles.

CHAPTER II

THE NORTHERN TRIP

JUST as soon as Theo had realized it had set in for a rainy Saturday, she called up Helen on the 'phone.

"Do bring your work and come over for the day," she said. "We're all of us going to make Christmas presents."

It really was a fascinating occupation. Jean was crocheting a soft lavender scarf for her mother, Helen embroidered forget-me-nots on a linen center piece, while Theo sat knitting silk neckties for the masculine members of the family. Marjory sat on a little footstool surrounded by pyramids of ribbons and silk pieces. She was making up little stout pin balls and violet sachets and though the shapes of some were not entirely like the patterns still there was love in every stitch.

"Do you think Cousin John would like brown and red, if I use a very dark wine tint?" Theo held up a half-finished necktie for inspection.

"It's dandy," Helen declared. "Make Scott's

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blue. Oh, it looks so nice and Christmasy here! I wish we had a big family."

Joan rose and stretched herself, smiling over the interesting disarray of the room.

"We mustn't forget Lidy and Happy Day. Those poor youngsters won't have a single present except what we give them. Old Pappy's wandered off to Tennessee with never a thought of them."

"He's worse than no father at all," declared Theo. "Of course we won't forget them. I'll bet a cookie they never even saw a Christmas tree in all their lives."

Margie glanced up pensively.

"I think I'll get Happy Day a doll's buggy, like the one Constance Evelyn has. I've got 'bout forty-seven pennies already."

Joan was thinking hard. "I don't suppose she ever had anything really pretty of her very own. Mother'll be sure to give them stockings and dresses and things like that; but those don't seem like presents for children. If we could club together and buy something dainty. A string of coral or a little locket and chain, she'd love that."

Bob suddenly burst into the room with a huge bowl of freshly popped and buttered corn.

"I know something that's lots more fun than sewing," he cried as he hopped around with it

just out of reach. "Don't you wish you had some, Snipwinkle?"

They all abandoned their sewing and gathered around the wide fireplace where Jack had been reading for the last half hour. The early winter twilight was darkening the room. It was the hour they all loved best. Even Scott strolled in to join the half circle.

"It's all so dreamy and mysterious," said Helen. "I love to plan in front of an open fire. I wish I could tell you all what Scott and I—"

"You might as well now," said Scott. "You almost let the cat out of the bag already."

Margie pricked up her ears.

"What cat?"

"'Tain't a real cat," Bob explained in his superior tone. "It's just a secret that Helen let out too soon."

Theo went around the room pulling down the window shades and snapping on the lights.

"Tell it, Helen. I'm dying with curiosity."

"Well, then," began Helen. "Aunt Caroline has invited Scott and me to spend the week before Christmas with her. She lives up the Hudson near Kingston, just where the Catskills begin. You have no idea the fun it will be. They have real winter there, and she wants you all to come up with us."

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Joan was sitting next to her twin, her chin resting on her hand as she leaned forward with sparkling eyes.

"Why, we never even saw snow in Georgia. I think that would be perfectly dandy. Do you suppose mother would let us go?"

A mischievous look was on Scott's face. He had been quiet for the past half hour, and none of the rest knew that he had already sprung the surprise on Mrs. Clayton.

The door opened softly as she entered, and they all tried to tell her at once.

"Softly, softly," she pleaded, sinking into the easy chair which Theo pushed forward for her. "One at a time, please. Scott just told me."

"Oh, you mustn't say no. Please. We've just set our hearts on having them all see the great mountain drifts, and really it is perfectly safe."

Joan never quite forgot the surprise she had when her mother consented. They had never been allowed to fly far from the home nest, and she well knew that this showed more than anything else could have done, the affection the Mother had for Helen and Scott.

The sixteenth of December was set as the date of departure. Even Margie was allowed to go, since Aunt Margaret, for whom she had been

named, was to chaperone them. For days before, Margie packed and repacked her cherished suitcase which Joan had brought her the year before from Richmond. Bob was to remain at home. At first, this was a disappointment, but when his mother explained in her tender tactful way that she couldn't spare him, he straightened his shoulders back in soldier fashion and said,

"You see, the Mater depends on me, so I have to be 'sponsible. She needs somebody to stay home and help her get ready for Christmas."

It was a wonderful trip. South of the Potomac the tobacco plantations showed only dry stubble now. Once when they shot into a tunnel suddenly, Margie clapped her hands over her eyes with a little cry of alarm. The train seemed to be filled with people who were on their way to spend the holidays with relatives and friends in the North. The Christmas spirit seemed a real bond of comradeship among them all. There was one old man in the next seat to Joan who confided to her wistfully,

"Jim's made a raise, and they've sent for the old man to come and spend Christmas with them. He's my boy, you know. Only one I've got left, and he's married a sightly girl, up in Jersey. They do say, I shan't ever go back again and mebbe if I see they sure want me, I'll stay on.

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The old house ain't what it was when Marthy was living."

Margie was delighted with a little traveling wicker bag on the seat across the aisle. Inside was a tiny French poodle. Its owner, a pretty brown eyed girl assured Margie that it knew perfectly well, if it made any disturbance, it would be put in the baggage car. Margie trotted over several times for a peek through the little windows, to see his bright eyes peeping out, and hear his anxious little whine.

A party of school girls on their way home for the holidays, shared a big box of chocolate walnut fudge when Joan passed some magazines to while away the time on the journey.

Once they were in Maryland, the clouds became lowering and it was evidently growing colder. All the children watched eagerly from the windows for the first sign of snow; and finally towards night, Joan caught sight of the first flakes.

"Oh, Margie," she called, delightedly. "Do come and see."

Wild with delight, Margie flattened her nose against the pane. They were the first snowflakes she had ever seen.

"It's just like the story in Grimm's Fairy Tales," she cried. "Where Mother Hulda shook

her feather beds, so it would snow in the upper World."

Joan whispered softly, half to herself,

"Out of the bosom of the air,
Out of the cloudfolds of her garments shaken,
Over the woodlands, brown and bare,
Over the harvest—"

"Here's Joan quoting poetry," laughed Theo. "I do believe I'm almost inspired myself. I never saw anything so beautiful."

All through the night the storm raged, until, as they reached the mountains, there was almost a blizzard. After a time, the train began to slacken speed. They had had breakfast and the two boys had been out on the observation platform. They came back, just as the girls were wondering what could be the matter.

"Snow may be all right," exclaimed Scott anxiously. "But one can get too much of a good thing. Looks as if we might be snowbound. The conductor says it is only seventy-five miles before we change cars for the Ulster & Delaware. If we can make that we'll be all right."

Just then the train stopped short. And Margie began to cry.

"I don't want to be under the snow like Eskimo children," she cried with her head in Joan's

lap. Hillview and mother seemed very far away.

The trouble, however, proved far less serious than they had thought. Before noon the snow was cleared from the tracks with a big snow plow, and the train started again.

"Change cars for Katoonah," shouted the trainman.

There was the usual confusion that always occurs when a train has been delayed. Before they knew it they were whisked off the Pullman and into the day coach of the mountain train.

"Are we all here?" asked Scott, as the porter hurried them into their seats, piling suitcases and handbags around them. Jack laughingly counted them off on his fingers.

"All present, captain," he replied.

"Oh, dear," lamented Margie. "They hurried us so, I never said good-by to the little dog."

"And I wanted to wish the old man Merry Christmas," Joan said thoughtfully. "I do hope he will be happy with his son. He looks as if he had had rather a hard life."

"Joan, I don't see what you find to say to these forlorn old waifs." Helen glanced out the window a little anxiously. "How fast we're going, Scott."

"Just making up time. This train had to wait

for ours. If we don't get blocked again, we'll be there in a couple of hours."

"I wonder," said Theo, "if those girls finished their candy. They must have had at least ten pounds between them."

They reached Katoonah early in the afternoon, and were delighted to find the old stage on runners waiting at the station. The driver had the whimsical, wrinkled face of a middle aged Rip Van Winkle, and welcomed them as if he had known them all his life.

"Them new fangled automobiles may be all right for fair weather," he chuckled. "But give me Nip and Tuck for a storm like this. Best pair o' colts in the mountains. Been on steady service with the stage for the last fifteen years to my certain knowledge."

Joan got in, and drew the blankets close up around her, tucking Margie between Theo and herself.

"I love the stage," she said. "Seems just as if we were in a story, doesn't it, Jack?"

"Do you folks come from far?" queried the driver. "Guess you ain't never seen snow like this. It's purty deep even for this part of the country. But around Indian Head and Grandview I've seen drifts ten feet high and more."

Margie eyed him with wondering skepticism

and decided she would write that one home to Bob.

As they reached the top of the hill, an old stone house with many gables came into view. Looking at it, Joan remembered Irving's description of Wolfert's Roost. It all seemed like a picture from a story. The first spurs of the Catskills rose in the distance; below the hill road lay a small beautiful lake that sparkled like crystal in the brilliant sunlight. Evergreen trees, their branches burdened with snow, grew in clumps on the wide lawn and bordered the drive.

Mr. Rogers had built the house years before, and so attached had they become to the quaint picturesque place, that after his death, his wife preferred to live there. Lonely enough it seemed to the children when they saw it that first time in the grip of winter; but Helen and Scott had spent several vacations there and hailed with joy the prospect of outdoor sports.

"Isn't it good to be warm?" asked Theo, holding her half frozen fingers close to the radiator. "I don't believe I ever want to go out of doors again."

Once inside the house, Joan's surprised eyes saw no further resemblance to Wolfert's Roost. Polished floors, handsome modern furniture and over all that indefinable touch of good taste and

refinement. After luncheon, Scott insisted on their exploring the pine grove down by the lake. The thermometer was below zero; but it was a still windless cold, and the sun shone brightly.

Jack and Scott started to make a snow man. It was a perfect picture to watch Margie's face the first time she tried to shape a snow ball.

"I think it would be better for ice cream," she said thoughtfully, her cheeks aglow with color from the cold air.

Theo demanded to be initiated into coasting and they helped Scott drag out the big bobsled from the shed and run with it over to the big hill above the lake. Joan never forgot her first trip down. She was on the sled, just behind Scott, her chin pressed against his shoulder, with the others behind her in toboggan fashion. As the sled reached high speed before it swung out across the lake, Margie let out a scream, but Helen had her arms around her, and they all found themselves at the bottom of the pasture below the lake, half rolled over in the snow.

It did seem that week as though Mrs. Rogers herself were a girl with them. She reminded Joan a good deal of Scott. They both had keen merry brown eyes and deep dimples with a radiant sense of humor. It seemed as though she thought up every possible mode of pleasure for

her young guests. There were moonlight sleighing parties and a wonderful trip in a big old hay wagon set on keen runners with buffalo robes covering the hay and heated soap-stones underneath to keep them all warm.

But Joan's favorite sport was skating. The lake had been cleared of snow and they all had skates. While Margie built a whole procession of snow men up on the lawn, the twins would slip away by themselves. Along the lower border of the lake the dark green pines formed a wonderful background for clumps of white birches. While Jack, well wrapped, sat on a fallen log, Joan skimmed over the surface of the lake, often returning for a little chat.

"Wouldn't this be a lovely spot in the summer time?" Joan said, one day. "Just thing of a camp up there under the pines, Jack! Can't you imagine yourself on a moonlight night in a birch-bark canoe?"

"Yes, and fishing on an early July morning. Wouldn't Bob love it with his rod? He'd catch something better than bullfrogs here."

One morning the two boys succeeded in manufacturing a pair of skis. Scott had already used them, and declared he could teach all of the others. He took Joan under his special attention, guiding and holding her so she would not fall, but

while it was lots of fun, Joan liked the skating better.

"I do hope wings are not as heavy as skis," she said laughingly, "'cause if they are, I know I'd flop terribly trying to be an angel."

The birds' Christmas tree was Margie's idea. Her heart had gone out in sympathy from the first to the little fellows hunching themselves up on the porch railing. So Helen suggested that they string suet and shreds of bacon on one of the evergreens near the house, and Margie tied tiny pieces of crusts and crackers to the twigs. When it was all ready, she watched breathlessly from the dining room window, but for a long while no bird ventured near.

"Oh, dear," she said. "I wish I could shoo them over." But just then one little lone snow-bird lighted curiously on the tree, his head turned first on one side and then on the other as he eyed the curious fruit it bore. In a few moments a blue jay and a red headed woodpecker joined the first comer, and after that Margie had her hands full with her winter boarders. Every morning they quarreled over the choicest bits; but Margie declared she knew they said, "Thank you."

The climax of the visit came when Mr. Porter arrived unexpectedly.

"Simply couldn't stay away," he explained to

Aunt Caroline. "I had to come up to New York on business, and it didn't seem fair for those youngsters to have all the fun. I never would have known them for the pale, tired-looking boys and girls who left Hillview a week ago."

He had planned to stay at the hotel, but the children all joined with Mrs. Rogers in coaxing him to spend the night at the Gables, and there was a twinkle in Scott's eyes as he got Jack and Joan and Helen to one side, and planned entertainment for their guest.

"Perhaps he won't like that sort of thing," Theo said, when they unfolded their plan, but the twins knew better. Scarcely was the six o'clock dinner over, when the tinkle of sleighbells sounded outside, and Scott drew the big sleigh up in front of the house with a flourish of the whip over the backs of two splendid bays.

"I haven't done this since I was a boy," exclaimed Mr. Porter, heartily, as they dashed off. "Scott, you rascal, move over and let me have the fun of driving."

It was a ride long to be remembered. The moon rose from behind the distant Catskills, throwing an almost unearthly light over the wonderful scenery. It seemed to Joan as though they skimmed the edges of great chasms where only the tops of the pines showed far below. Once

they swung about a spur of the mountain that brought into sight a great vista up the valley. Scott pointed out where Indian Head, Grandview and Shamokin lay far off in the heart of old Rip Van Winkle's hills.

On the way back they sang all the old songs of college days, Cousin John leading with his high baritone, but the favorite one was,

“Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the way,
It's my delight
To ride all night,
In a one horse open sleigh.”

After more than three hours of sleighing and singing, they swung back through the great entrance gates to the Gables, and found the big dining room full of a fresh surprise. There was an oyster supper waiting and what appetites they all had, to do justice to it. While they were all telling stories in the big living room before the open fire, Jack and Mr. Porter were suddenly missed. Aunt Caroline said it was about time for little folks to be in bed, but just as she passed the window, Margie gave an exclamation.

“Oh, look at the birds' Christmas tree. They've got it all lighted up.” The rest hurried out on the porch to look, and it really was a beau-

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tiful picture. With the other tall evergreens standing about like dark sentinels, Margie's one plump little pine showed a blaze of glory. It only lasted a few moments for the night wind blew the candles right out.

"Never mind," said Cousin John. "Next time we'll have little electric globes, but I'm old fashioned and I didn't think about the wind."

Mrs. Rogers' arm was around Joan's slim waist. Somehow in this one short week, she had grown to know and admire Jack's twin very much. While she lacked Helen's impulsive vivacity and Theo's rather mature steadiness, there was a dreamy charm about Joan that endeared her to everyone.

"Have you enjoyed yourself, dear?" she asked.

"Oh, wonderfully," Joan answered with a little sigh. "I'll never forget it as long as I live. If only Bob and mother could have been here, too, it would have been perfect."

"But you'll be home in time to wish her a Merry Christmas, and I don't think that any of you can possibly know the comfort I have had from her lending me her dear ones."



"JINGLE BELLS, JINGLE BELLS, JINGLE ALL THE WAY"

CHAPTER III

CHRISTMAS AT HILLVIEW

BOB found during the week before Christmas that after all there were many compensations for having been left behind. As far back as he could remember, he had never been allowed to help trim the tree, but this year he even helped Tony take it in to the library and set it up in the alcove.

Mrs. Clayton brought forth a box of ornaments that had been used over and over again since Theo was a baby. Mr. Porter had sent down a glittering array of wonderful new things from New York, but to Bob's mind the old treasures were best.

He had had the time of his life while the rest of the children were away. There was a very tender and close bond between the ten year old boy and his mother, and he enjoyed the novelty of being all alone with her. After Tony had set the last touch to the big tree, Bob led her in for the last stamp of approval on their work.

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He drew a long breath of happiness as he looked at the tree.

"We didn't know which would be better to have at the top: the angel that we have always had there, or this big new gold bell."

"Better put the angel in her old place," said mother. "The children will miss her if she is not there to greet them."

"I suppose," Bob replied, thoughtfully, "angels and stars are sort of religious, and bells are just—bells, you know."

He patted Chevalier, the handsome Irish setter, on the head with grave satisfaction.

"It's fine, isn't it, old boy? 'Bout the prettiest I ever saw."

The Christmas presents were all stored in the garret in the little room that Jack and Joan had fitted up long ago as a retreat for study and consultation. Here in the old "Sanctuary," were dozens of packages on boxes, chairs and tables, all wrapped in tissue paper, and sealed with red cross stamps. Tony helped Bob bring them down in the clothes basket, Bob panting, and repeating at every step almost,

"Guess this is going to be 'bout the biggest Christmas of all for we'uns."

Mrs. Clayton sat in the big armchair smiling at the little chap encouragingly. It was hard

work that first time hanging all the smaller parcels on the lower branches of the tree and piling the largest ones around the base. Also it took much self control to keep from even feeling the contour of each and trying to guess what was inside. Right in the midst of all the excitement, the postman brought two boxes from Mrs. Monroe, with a note to Mrs. Clayton, wishing them all a Merry Christmas, and asking them to accept these gifts from Helen and Scott and herself.

Bob pried off the cover with a screw driver. One box was full of carefully wrapped packages each marked with the name of the recipient. The other box was packed closely with berries and leaves of the California pepper tree, interspersed with mistletoe and holly. The long journey had proved too much for the poinsettias, and most of the red petals had fallen off. "How the girls will love these!" exclaimed Mrs. Clayton as she held up a feathery spray with waxy pink berries on it. Tony hung it from the chandelier, and when the last parcel had been placed at the foot of the tree, Bob gave a little sigh of satisfaction and settled himself on a footstool beside his mother.

"Dear little man," she said in a tender tone, stroking his hair, gently. "You have surely

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learned the secret of Christmas happiness, this year. Loving service."

Bob swallowed hard as he always did at a word of praise, and said comfortably,

"I reckon they'll like it all right, 'specially when they see all those things Scott's mother sent."

All the way down on the train, Joan had been coaxing Helen and Scott to stay over Christmas at Hillview, and when they finally arrived Mrs. Clayton added her urging, so that the two accepted. Under all Helen's gayety and Scott's boyish nonchalance, they both dreaded the first Christmas away from their Mother. While the rest were telling of the wonderful time at the Gables, Jack put his arm affectionately around Bob's shoulders.

"We wished you were with us often, old fellow," and unconsciously Bob's shoulders straightened in soldierly style as he answered,

"Well, you see, I couldn't exactly make it go this time. The mater and I had too much to do. There's lots of surprises. Folks can't go visitin' and know what's going on at home."

Theo rumped up his hair lovingly.

"It's all too mysterious for me," she said. "I can hardly wait until morning, so I guess we had better hang up our stockings and go to bed."

It was a most interesting array in front of the fireplace that night. Mr. Porter brought out a long red stocking that he declared he had kept since he was a boy for the baffling of Santa Claus, and Margie hung up a tiny blue one for her favorite doll. In spite of the long railroad journey, she was out of bed before six o'clock the next morning, and all the rest followed in "self defense" as Joan said. Bob danced delightedly as Mr. Porter drew out a toy automobile which even the big red stocking could not accommodate.

"Bless my soul," he exclaimed, "if that isn't the broadest kind of a hint. I believe nothing would suit you all better than to have me buy a big touring car. I guess we'll have to see about that, Bob."

In the very toe of Joan's stocking was a small white box marked "A Merry Christmas from Scott." On the soft cotton inside lay a green enameled four leaf clover with a tiny pearl like a dew drop on one of its petals. It was all so like Scott that Joan cried happily,

"Oh, Scott, now I know I'll have good luck the whole year through."

Before they were half way through, Tony, proud in the possession of a new red necktie, and Nanny with her broadest smile and a red bandanna turban on her head brought in the tradi-

tional egg nogg. Cousin Porter, lifting his tall old fashioned glass proposed the health of everyone at Hillview.

Then Tony bore the punch bowl back to the kitchen where Marm Dilsey served each of the colored servants in turn, saying with great dignity,

"I wish you-all the very finest kind of health until Christmas comes again."

The children all crowded the back hallway to watch, and Helen declared,

"I never knew there was so much sentiment in the world, till I came South. Wasn't Marm Dilsey gracious?"

Breakfast was scarcely over when Lidy and Happy Day came running up the drive. A very strange and wonderful thing had happened in the past months. With everything against her, with even the verdict of the specialists at Richmond, the final blow of complete blindness had not fallen on Happy Day. She had returned to the loving care of Lidy. Every night the two of them knelt beside the little bed up at the mountain cabin and asked God to please not let all the light go out for Happy Day, and it did seem as if it were being answered.

Bob, as master of ceremonies, attended to sliding back the doors, while Theo sat at the piano

and played a joyous Christmas carol. After the excitement had subsided and Mr. Porter had blessed his soul the usual number of times, he helped Bob distribute the presents, commencing with,

“Something for the boy who stayed at home.”

Bob couldn't speak as he looked down at the real watch, lying in his hand. All he could do was smile and swallow hard.

“Oh, look, girls!” cried Joan, opening her package from Mrs. Monroe. “Isn't this beautiful?” She held up a dainty, violet kimono embroidered in wistaria. There was a brown one for Theo with beautifully shaded golden chrysanthemums, and Helen slipped into a pale blue one embroidered in pink cherry blossoms.

Every one at Hillview was remembered in the California box, even to Aunt Johnny, the dear little blind old maid neighbor, who had made Joan's vacation so happy. Helen had written and told her mother of her, and there was a little silk bag of dried lavender tied with dainty ribbon to tuck away among Aunt Johnny's precious laces. For Jack and Scott and Margie there were scarf pins and a little bracelet, all made of the pearly abalone shell; a five pound box of candied fruits for Mrs. Clayton, and a carved orange wood ash tray for Mr. Porter.

In the excitement the children almost forgot Lidy and Happy Day. Over by the door they stood, close together, bewildered by the confusion, scarcely understanding what it was all about. Joan saw them and thought of an old picture that used to hang in her mother's room at home, called "The Orphans," two children clinging to each other, Henriette and her little blind sister, Louise. In spite of her life of hard work and care, Lidy looked like some delicate mountain flower as she stood there, patting Happy Day's curls gently and reassuringly. Joan took them by their hands, one on each side of her, and led them up to the tree. Shyly, but yearningly, Happy Day stretched out her fingers, those little groping fingers, and touched the green branches.

"I can see the lights a little bit, Lidy," she whispered. "It's lovely, isn't it?"

Lidy's eyes shone with happiness. She guided the childish hands from one ornament to another, explaining each one.

"Don't you remember, Happy Day," she said eagerly; "don't you remember how Maw used to tell us all about the tree they all had onct down at the Mission, and it was trimmed with popcorn and cranberries? They didn't have presents on it, 'cause that cost too much, but there

was whole piles of popcorn, Maw said, 'nuff for everybody."

Bob went straight under the tree on all fours. He knew exactly where he had piled certain interesting parcels.

"Catch, Lidy!" he called, tossing them out. "Here's some more."

"Oh, but not for us, be they?" exclaimed Lidy, almost in alarm. "These can't be all for us. Maw'd never want us to take them, and Pappy'll be fearful angry."

"No, he won't," Joan promised, cheerfully. "Because we won't let him. This is what Christmas is for. It's different from other days." She clasped a little gold chain around Happy Day's neck, one that had been hers long ago, while Helen and Theo were busy tying a pink bow on Lidy's braids, and showing her how to play with a little toy bead loom.

"Here's corals for you, Lidy," Bob announced, picking off a long double strand from the tree. "Those are from Theo."

Lidy suddenly ducked her head down on Theo's shoulder as the latter knelt beside her sorting out the different colored beads. In all her sixteen years nobody had ever given her anything that was not strictly useful. She didn't know what a real gift looked like even, but now

her eyes filled with quick tears, and all she could do was say to Happy Day who tugged at her wistfully,

"Let me alone a minute, honey dear, just a minute. It's too much all to onct."

Theo coaxed Happy Day to take the coral beads in her hands and slip them around Lidy's throat herself, until she looked up and laughed back at them all, shy eyed and ashamed of breaking down. Then Happy Day took something out of her pocket and held it out to Joan. It was a little crocheted doily, one she had made all herself, and Lidy had her own surprise for each of the girls and Mrs. Clayton. She had woven sweet grass baskets for them all, and woven them as delicately and carefully as though her hands were not roughened by hard work.

"Do you know, Lidy," Helen declared, as she held up hers, "I'm going to peddle sweet grass baskets for you? These are just dear, and in the city they cost so much. If you can make up some, I know Aunt Caroline would help sell them."

Lidy's face colored at the warm praise. Joan had slipped down on the stool at her mother's feet for just a minute's rest, and looking at the mountain girl's face, she whispered softly,

"I didn't know you could make so much happiness out of little things, Mother dear."

After supper they gathered around the piano for a long evening of Christmas music. Joan and Helen lighted the candles, as Cousin John loved to see them, and they all joined in singing the dear old familiar carols and hymns. Happy Day sang with the rest, and towards the end Margie coaxed her to sing all by herself.

"Sing the one you like best," she urged, and nothing loath, Happy Day, holding fast to Lidy's hand, lifted up her head and sang in her clear, childish treble, a little old darky Christmas melody, keeping time to it unconsciously with her shoulders,

"Sing high, sing low,
Sing to and fro,
Go tell it out with speed,
Cry out and shout,
All 'round about,
The Lord is born indeed."

The children broke into prolonged applause after it was over, and Mr. Porter who had been watching Happy Day keenly, bent over Mrs. Clayton's chair and spoke in an undertone.

"What an attractive little child she is. Can you see the resemblance of the older girl to that

old painting? I mean the general's disinherited son? It's very marked, I think, to-night."

Mrs. Clayton nodded her head slowly, musingly.

"You know Joan has always insisted she has the Clayton eyes. Life is full of coincidences."

After the festivities were over, Mr. Porter paused before the old portrait of Richard Clayton, on his way upstairs, and held his candle high to get a good look at the fine, mobile face.

"It's there," he said to himself. "Certainly there is a resemblance around the eyes."

Clad in her new kimono Joan slipped into her mother's room for a good-night hug, and last little chat.

"You know, Mother mine," she said, "I do believe that this year is different from all other years I've known. We've had more of the real Christmas spirit, I mean in giving. It really is more fun giving things than getting them, isn't it?"

"I think that has been said better," smiled Mrs. Clayton. "'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

"Yes, I know," sighed Joan happily, kissing her. "And, Mother, do you know I just can't help wishing it was true."

"What was true, dear?"

"That Lidy and Happy Day really and truly belonged in our family. They're so nice, and don't you see how much Lidy looks like the old portrait, now?"

Mrs. Clayton was silent for a moment. It was hard to regulate Joan's fancies, to bring her down to facts. Life was usually to Joan, what she would like it to be, not what it really was.

"Well, anyway, just because there is no real relationship is no reason why you should not love and help them. We'll do all that we can to take them out of their old life and encourage Pappy to look after them better. Anything else?"

"No, thank you, Mother darling," Joan gave one last hug. "You do understand so, you know, you mustn't mind if we all come to you and lay our burdens down."

Theo caught the mailman first the following morning, and came into the breakfast room holding high a cream envelope.

"The Misses Clayton," she announced, "and there is yours, Helen, and Jack and Scott's."

"Where's mine?" asked Bob, with dignity. "Time I was being invited to functions and things, I think."

"Just you wait, old boy," Jack told him, toweling his hair up in comradely fashion. "What is it, Theo? Dance?"

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"At the Meadowview Club," Joan cried, taking a peak over Theo's shoulder. "Reception to friends of members, four to six. Dancing from eight to eleven. That's something like."

"With all the boys and girls home from college, besides our own university fellows, eh, Jack?" Scott exclaimed. "Jim Blair's home from Boston Tech., and Hunter Harrison from Harvard."

"And Drina from Bryn Mawr," Joan added, "and Connie from Dana Hall, and they say Tom Barry came all the way from Berkeley for the holidays."

"Was that all?" inquired Helen, innocently, and they all laughed at Joan's pink cheeks. "Oh, Scott, I'm so glad we stayed over."

"Yes, and what are you going to wear?" Theo put in practically. "You girls leave everything until the very last minute, and then expect me to turn into a fairy godmother and change you into glorious Cinderellas."

They had five days before the event, and never did time pass so slowly. Mrs. Clayton's sitting room was cluttered from one end to the other with gowns and what Margie called "fashings." But the end quite justified all time expended, Theo said comfortably, when they finally started out New Year's Eve.

The club house was a particularly attractive

little edifice, so all its members thought. It had been built on the colonial plan, with white pillars in front, a gallery over the wide porch, and a general air of hospitality and spaciousness once you were within. In the central hall rose a large fireplace where the yule log still burned. On the mantel above stood at least a dozen silver cups which had been won at tennis by various of the members. On the floor lay a large bearskin rug and above the mantel hung a boar's head.

"Looks just like a razorback hog," Bob always declared, just to get a rise out of Scott and Jack.

There were college pennants and colors along the walls and above the doors and windows. Joan thought she never had seen the rooms look so attractive. Wreaths and bells hung at the windows, and the big chandeliers had been draped with long festoons of evergreen and ground pine. Here and there little bunches of mistletoe, half concealed, caused cries of merriment.

During the afternoon the rooms were thronged with the many friends who came to revive the pleasant old custom of New Year calls. Mr. Porter was on hand as usual, with a warm word of welcome for everybody.

"I think I belong here as much as any of the boys," he said. "I'm from Harvard, and can root for the blues any time."

But it was in the evening that the fun really began. Under softly shaded lights the groups of girls seemed like beds of flowers. Theo wore shell pink *crêpe de Chine*, trimmed with tiny pink and blue satin roses, and bore herself with that touch of dignity that made her so like her mother. Helen was in blue, blue that matched her eyes, with a long filmy lace scarf her mother had worn when she was a girl. Joan always liked white best of all.

"Maybe it is bridey, but I like it just the same," she had declared, putting some fresh touches to her pretty silk voile. "I wish I had jasmine buds this minute to tuck in my hair."

Jim Blair devoted himself to Theo as usual. The girls always teased her about her "attendant swain," as Helen dubbed him, because they always corresponded and danced well together. Helen had her own special coterie, but Joan was the most popular girl in the whole room. She had a comradely way that always held the boys loyal, a little too loyal, Scott thought, as he watched her dance with one after the other. Still she wore the little four leaf clover pin, but the worst of it was, he saw Tom's frat. pin fastening a rose at her waist too.

"Girls are queer people, aren't they?" he said to Jack. Jack was right in his element this year.

He hardly ever used his crutch now. Mr. Porter had insisted on treatment by specialists all during the past year, and now Jack had only a slight limp. Regular exercises and determination had worked wonders. He felt mighty proud of his twin and her social triumphs. Sometimes as she went by him in the dance they smiled with mutual understanding. He wondered if Joan was thinking of the old celebrations at Juniper Inn, where like the kiddies in Riley's poem, they had "been so happy and so poor."

All too soon the hands of the grandfather's clock pointed to eleven. Still they pleaded for "just one dance more." But Mr. Porter announced,

"It won't do to turn the clock back any more or it will be Sunday morning surely."

Reluctantly the gay party broke up, and just as they were leaving, Joan lingered to help a moment, as she was on the committee of decorations. Tom and Scott helped too, eagerly keeping near her, but she said good-by to Tom at the door.

"And kept his frat. pin," Scott told her, as he helped her into the waiting carriage. "You can't wear both, can you?"

But Joan only laughed at him. She had not come from a long line of southern belles for nothing.

"I can wear one at a time," she said. "I couldn't refuse, could I, when he was going way back to college, and Tom's such a dandy chap?"

"She's got six frat. pins to my certain knowledge," murmured Jack sotto voce. "She's making a collection, Scott."

"Not of four leaf clovers," Joan smiled back over her shoulder, and Scott was satisfied.

CHAPTER IV

THE LETTER FROM CALIFORNIA

IT was the middle of January. The "den class," as Theo called it, had settled down to a good winter of hard study, Joan speeding up to keep pace with her twin. Jack had always been a winner at mathematics, but he came a heavy cropper over his English while Joan simply sailed with ease over English and the classics, and dodged her math. Scott was a good deal of a plodder. Some days he would work with a will, and then would come a long stretch of slow plodding.

"I hate routine stuff," he would declare. "I'm going to be an explorer."

"Yes, and Scott's idea of being an explorer is to wear a stunning suit of khaki, and a Stanley helmet, and go gallantly gunning through the untracked wilderness after something," Jack laughed. "Why, boy, that's right where you'd need mathematics and science."

"No, sir, I wouldn't. I'd take along an expert like you," retorted Scott.

One day, just as they were deep in a problem in geometry, Helen burst into the room, waving a letter at them all triumphantly. Scott said Helen should have been Pandora. She had a perfect genius for springing surprises on other people out of the box of life's gifts.

"Guess," she cried, happily. "Guess, Scott, please. It's from Mother. I'm simply wild."

"Going, going, gone!" teased Scott. "Spring it quick, or there'll be a case of spontaneous combustion."

Helen perched on the edge of the long study table, and read aloud,

"Dear Daughter Girl:

"Your letter telling all about your visit to Aunt Caroline's, and the happy Christmas at Hillview, just received. I presume you and Scott are hard at work again, now. Can you imagine that while you were snowballing and skating, your father and myself were picking oranges and eating fresh strawberries in this Sun-land."

"Umm," groaned Scott, "strawberries in December!"

"That's only the beginning," Helen replied, and read on eagerly.

"This is indeed a paradise of bloom at this time

of the year. Immense groves of lemon and orange trees, hedges of geraniums and calla lilies, with tropical palms on every side."

"That must be great," Jack exclaimed, dropping his Euclid, and leaning his chin on his hand. "Go on, Helen. You've got my mouth watering now."

"Just you wait till you hear it all," advised Helen as she resumed:

"I am sure you will be interested to hear about the Tournament of Roses in Pasadena. We were fortunate enough to be able to secure excellent seats, and could see the whole of it. It is really a wondrous pageant, Helen. You and Scott may like to know the story of how it was inaugurated as a yearly custom here.

"It was established in 1885, as a festival to celebrate the ripening of the orange, and symbolizes the greeting of Flora, goddess of flowers, to the fruits over whose harvesting Pomona ruled.

"They celebrate it on January 1st, out here, the date nearest to the time when oranges are picked. In some ways it reminded us of the Carnival at New Orleans and the Battle of the Roses at Rome, only that the great profusion of flowers makes it so marvelously beautiful. It lasted all day, beginning with a parade of horses

and flower decorated automobiles followed by gorgeous floats fashioned almost entirely of flowers of every conceivable hue.

"Flora, herself, was represented by a girl reclining on a flower decorated couch in a bower of roses. After this float came 'The Pipes of Pan,' Pan sitting at the base of a miniature grotto, while all about him danced youths and maidens holding garlands of green. Shepherds and goatherds, dressed in skins and bearing wreaths and long strands of grape leaves and oak, attended him. Another car was one mass of California poppies, which seem neither orange tinted nor yellow, but like pure gold and soft as satin."

"Oh, I want to go there," exclaimed Joan rapturously. "Go on, Helen, quick!"

"One float was designed after the famous painting of the Aurora, Apollo, god of day, driving the chariot while Aurora, goddess of dawn, led the way, scattering roses. Young girls followed her, representing the hours, each holding a different flower. It was a harmony of colors. There were automobiles without number along the way, banked with American Beauty roses, poppies, geraniums, bougainvillæa—"

"What under the canopy is that?" asked Scott urgently.

"I know," replied Helen. "Aunt Caroline told me. She said lots of it grows in Mexico. It's the most peculiar color, neither red nor crimson, but between them both, and it climbs all over the verandas and archways in the patios."

"Patios," laughed Scott. "You're so sweetly lucid, sister mine. And it's neither red nor crimson, but betwixt and between. Jack, I'll bet a cookie it's old rose scarlet maroon."

"Well, it's gorgeous, just the same," insisted Helen, ignoring his nonsense serenely. Now listen to this:

"The prettiest float of all, I thought, was the one called 'Little Loves.' It was a car filled with twenty-five children dressed as cupids, just a solid mass of white roses and the children scattering snowy petals everywhere along the way."

"That's mine," Margie announced happily. "I want that one."

Helen read on:

"There were many others equally beautiful. Nowhere else could there be such a display as this at a time of the year when most of the civilized world is buried in the grip of the frost king. After the floats came the chariot races, cheered as enthusiastically by this twentieth century crowd as were the Roman chariots in the days of long ago."

"Helen," Jack cried. "Do you honestly think it's fair for you to come in here in study hours and read all that to us? How do you expect us to settle down and do anything after that?"

"Mmmm," breathed Helen, mysteriously, "the best is yet to come. You'll never even imagine it."

"Oh, go on," begged Scott. "Don't stop at the best part."

"It doesn't seem as if there could be anything better," Joan added, dreamily, looking out of the window at the wintry landscape. How many months it would be before the flowers came!

"Just listen." Helen leaned forward impressively, and sprang her best news. "Father and Mother have decided to stay in California!"

Scott sprang from his chair, half overturning it, his face alight with expectation.

"You don't mean it, Helen. Does Mother say so there?"

Helen nodded delightedly, holding the letter just out of his reach as she got behind Joan.

"Listen to what she says if you don't believe me: 'Your father is delighted with the climate and has made up his mind to remain here. He is greatly improved in health and never wants to spend another winter in the east, so we have decided to accept the offer on our eastern property and remain here.'"

"I always said Dad would buy an orange grove," Scott declared enthusiastically.

"Do wait till I finish," begged Helen. "'Of course you and Scott must join us as soon as you finish school. We have set our hearts on having Joan spend the summer with us, so you must try and persuade her to do so. I have already written to Mrs. Clayton about it.' There," Helen folded the letter, and breathed a deep sigh as she looked at her auditors. "What do you think of that?"

"Oh, if I only could," Joan exclaimed. "Jack, what do you think?"

"It's up to the Mater, of course," said Jack. "I only hope you can go."

"I haven't quite finished," added Helen, suddenly going back to the letter. "Here's just a little more. 'We are at present in a steam heated hotel as the nights and early mornings are rather cool. Until we know more definitely about the summer plans, we shall stay here. Hoping to hear from you, and with love to Scott and yourself from Father and your affectionate mother.'"

"Now, my lady Joan," Scott asked, teasingly, "what have you got to say?"

"I simply can't imagine anything nicer, and it's dear of her to ask me, but—"

"But what? Don't begin hunting up reasons

why you can't go," Helen said practically, hunting for a calendar on the desk. "I'll write to mother this evening and tell her we'll start the day after school closes. Let's see, that's the fifth of June, isn't it?"

Joan laughed merrily.

"I was only going to suggest that we consult mother first. You know that is rather a long trip, way across the whole United States."

"Then ask her now, this very minute," urged Helen. "When I came in she was in the library with Mr. Porter."

As they entered the room where Mrs. Clayton sat sewing, Mr. Porter laid aside his evening paper and smiled at them whimsically. He was extremely fond of young people, and Mrs. Clayton often said she believed he actually enjoyed being persuaded by them into all sorts of "antics."

"Bless my soul, look at the procession," he said. "I thought you youngsters were buried in your books."

"We were," Joan spoke up for the others, "wrestling over geometry when Helen had to come in and get us all upset and excited over roses and festivals and California poppies, and—and—what else was there, Helen?"

"Oh, it's perfectly splendid," Helen broke in impulsively; "a long, long letter from mother

and father, but you'll have to hear it to understand what we're after."

She sat down on a chair by the big open fireplace, while Joan slipped down beside her mother, and straightened out the little skeins of colored embroidery that had fallen from her lap. During the reading of the letter she watched her mother's face anxiously, and asked as soon as Helen had finished,

"What do you think, mother? Could I go, possibly?"

After a moment of hesitation, Mrs. Clayton smiled down at her.

"Are you sure you want to, Joan? I received a letter also from Mrs. Monroe a few days ago, and have been considering the matter seriously. In fact, only this afternoon your cousin and I were discussing it. It's a long distance from home, dear. Think well before you say yes."

"Of course it's hard to think of leaving you and Theo and—" Joan's voice lowered now, "dear old Jack and the little ones, but, oh, mother dear, I would love to see California."

"I understand perfectly." Mrs. Clayton's hand smoothed the soft hair tenderly. "It is an unusual opportunity, and I should have no anxiety about you for you would be in good care. Besides, we both feel, your cousin and myself,

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that the summer out there would do you a great deal of good."

"What was that that Stevenson wrote," asked Scott teasingly, "something about 'Traveling with a Donkey.' If I'm to escort these two girls, what's to become of me? They'll boss the life out of me before we get there."

Helen gave a good hard tug to his hair and a sisterly kiss for good measure.

"So it is decided we go," said Joan, delightedly.

"If nothing happens to prevent," said her mother. "It isn't February yet, remember, and this will happen in June."

"Oh, you are a darling mother," Helen exclaimed, "to loan us Joan. It's too good to be true." She whirled away to tell Theo. Scott was quite as pleased and excited too, but he was quieter and more deliberate. Before following his sister he said at the foot of the stairs to Joan,

"We'll do our best to give you a good time, and you can't help but love mother, you may be sure of that."

Joan's cup was full to the brim. All her life California had been like a dream to her. To Helen and Scott it only meant one more delightful journey. Ever since they were little, traveling had been an ordinary and frequent recreation, but to Joan it was something more. Even

the trip up to the Catskills at Christmas had been a great event, and this was way across the continent. She felt almost subdued as she thought of the whole undertaking, and it was not until she found herself back over the neglected geometry with Jack that she realized what it would mean to leave him behind. She looked at him with such a comical expression of contrition and regret that Jack asked,

"What is it, little twin? You look as sober as Bobbie when he's cogitating over a Latin verse."

"Oh, Jack," she exclaimed impulsively. "I didn't think at first. I'm selfish and mean and everything else. How can I ever go away from you for the whole summer long?"

Affectionately Jack's arm slipped about her. He was not very demonstrative when any one else was around, but alone she was his good old pal and twin.

"Don't you worry a bit about that," he said. "I'll write you the best letters I can, and think how bully it will be when you come back. How much you'll have to tell me."

Helen's letter to her mother was most characteristic. She wrote it in time to catch the late afternoon post, and would not even let Scott see it.

"Mother dear:—We are all so excited. The things you wrote about in your letter were just fascinating, and I can hardly wait for June to come. Scott says he's going to crawl in a hole some place and hibernate. And, mother, what do you suppose, Mrs. Clayton says Joan may come with us, that is, if nothing happens to prevent. I know you and father will love her to death. She's a dear, splendid, you know, and steady, not a scatterbrain like I am. And still, she's full of fun and jolly even if she is sensible.

"Scott says he will write you to-morrow. He's just as much excited as I am, only he's a boy, and don't dare to show it.

"I've begun to check off the days on the calendar so soon. February, March, April, May, and then—June! Good-by. Lots of love to father, and a great big kiss to you from,

"HELEN."

Once the decision was made, the entire family set to work studying the country west of the Mississippi. Any one would think, as Theo said, that she was setting out for her California summer in a prairie schooner, the anxiety and consideration that they all gave to it.

"Where's Pike's Peak?" asked Margie one day, looking up from her geography. "Will you

stand right on it, Joan, right on the tip top of it?"

"It's in Colorado, isn't it, Cousin John?" Bob put in proudly. "'Course she won't stand on it, goosie. It's a big rock up in the clouds."

"Right the first time, sonny," laughed Cousin John. "It's part of the Rocky Mountain range."

"I wonder what the desert is like?" asked Joan, thoughtfully.

"No camels or Arabs in ours," Scott told her. "Sand and cactus and hot enough to roast anybody."

"What's cactus?" asked Bobbie inquisitively. Dearly he loved to discover a brand new word.

"I know, I know," Margie fairly danced at getting even with him. "Aunt Johnny's got one in a flower pot and it's all funny and prickly with a little pink flower."

"You know I've been thinking," said Mr. Porter suddenly, slipping his arm around the discomfited Bobbie. "Perhaps Bob and I may decide to take the trip with you just to see that you get there safely. It's years since I was in California, and I've been wondering if we couldn't go by way of San Francisco. Bob and I might stay a few weeks with you at the beach and then leave Joan for the summer."

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He was interrupted by cries of approval and clapping of hands. Bob was literally beside himself at the proposal and Margie said in her matter-of-fact way, that it was perfectly fair he should go, after she had had the trip up to the mountains.

After that Bob pored over his geography daily, and Jack declared he knew the whole state of California from north to south.

When Mr. Porter brought home a number of railroad folders there was an eager rush for them.

"'San Francisco and How to See It,' " read Joan, taking one from the top. "Listen while I read it."

But Helen and Scott were exclaiming over a tour through "Chinatown After Dark."

"I want to go there for my share of the fun," Scott cried. "Chinky, winky Chinatown, when the lights are low!"

"What's this?" asked Margie eagerly, trying to spell out a big word. "O-b-s-e-r-" she stopped as it proved too much for her.

Bob came to the rescue. It was always comical to watch the rivalry between the two.

"I s'pose that's Lowes's Observatory," he finished. "There's a telescope there and you can see all sorts of funny things in the sky."

"But listen here," Jack put in, "this hits me right. 'Trolley Trips through Wonderland.' You must write me all about those."

"And here are the big trees, thousands of years old," Helen pored over the booklet eagerly. "I'd love to see them. Do you suppose we could?"

"Bless my soul, you're going to keep me busy, I can see that," Mr. Porter sighed in mock despair. "Bob, will you promise to nurse me if I come down with nervous prostration? I'm afraid we can't go to the Yosemite this trip, but perhaps we can run out in an automobile and see the trees near San Francisco."

"Can we dip in Great Salt Lake?" asked Scott.

"I think so. I have business in Salt Lake City for a few days, so we ought to be able to manage it, but mind, don't you dare demand the Yellowstone or Grand Canyon or Cliff Dwellers in Utah. Something must be left for another time."

"Here's something about a cat," said Bob reflectively.

"'Tis not," Margie denied. "It's C-a-t-a-"

"Catalina Island," Helen prompted. "I know. It's the loveliest place. Mother says it reminds her of the Island of Capri in the Bay of

Naples. We'll just have to go there when we get as far as Los Angeles."

That night Scott wrote to his father. There had been a strong new bond of understanding between the two since the passing of the cloud the previous year while Scott was at Juniper Inn. It seemed as though Scott could never quite make up to his father in honor and respect for the way he had doubted him. So now he wrote,

"Dear Dad:

"I think it is fine of Mother and you to let us come on for the summer. Mr. Porter and Bobbie are going to make the trip with us, so we shall see San Francisco first. Isn't that great? Bob's a dandy little chap. They will stay a few weeks in Los Angeles and then return east, leaving Joan with us. She's the best girl ever was, no foolishness, you know, like most girls have. I'm glad you and Mother are going to know her for I'm sure you'll be pals. It won't be long now. We're all going around with railroad guides and geographies.

"By the way, Joan has brown hair and the darkest brown eyes I ever saw. Jack, my chum, is her twin, so naturally I like her and I want her to have a good time, Dad.

"Good-by, with love,

"SCOTT."

Back came the answer in two weeks, Mrs. Monroe answering for both herself and husband,

"We're delighted that you are coming and that Mr. Porter will be able to make the trip with you. We are sure to love Joan quite as much as you seem to, I know.

"In all probability we shall take a cottage at the beach and have you all come there. They are the most delightful bungalows you ever saw, and then after you have had your fill of ocean bathing, we will begin our search for a permanent home near Los Angeles. While there are many beautiful large houses, it is the bungalows that appeal to us easterners. They are so decidedly Californian and so beautiful, smothered in vines and flowers."

In the midst of the excitement over the reading of the letter, in came Bobbie, hatless and out of breath. As soon as he was within hearing, though, he shouted,

"Pappy's home!"

"Oh, Bobbie, are you sure?" asked Mrs. Clayton.

And a hush fell on the little group. Pappy had stayed away so long this time, they had all begun to think he would never come back any

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more, and the girls had taken Lidy and Happy Day under their wings, so to speak, to comfort and cheer up.

"Maybe it isn't so," Margie said, hopefully. "Did you just guess it, Bobbie?"

Bobbie pointed out of the window.

"Lidy told me herself," he retorted. "There she is, and she's been crying."

CHAPTER V

"PAPPY'S" RETURN

Yes, there was no doubt about it. Pappy was certainly home again. Just a minute or two after Bob's announcement Lidy arrived, breathless and excited. On going to the cabin that afternoon in search of early wild flowers, she had found a window partly open.

"I kinder thought he must have come back," she told them, her eyes wide and full of pain. "So I unlocked the door and went in. And there he was, all just wore out, lying on the bed. I called to him, 'Pappy, Pappy,' and he moved a little bit and opened his eyes, but he didn't even know who I was."

Joan put her arm around her waist as the tears began to fall fast from Lidy's eyes.

"I knelt down beside him and gave him some water. And I smoothed his hair that was all matted and rough and talked to him but he didn't know a word I said. And after he drank the water, I took off his old torn coat and pulled him up on the pillow, but he's gone again."

"Walked off?" Bob's tone was full of awe.

"No," said Lidy mournfully. "I mean in his head. He lies there just like he was dead for sure. Oh, what shall I do, Miss Joan?"

She dropped her face in her hands, and Joan comforted her. At a signal from her mother, Theo slipped away to telephone the doctor while Mr. Porter said he would go straight up to the cabin with Lidy. Joan promised she would be up the first thing in the morning, and offered to keep Happy Day, but Lidy could not bear to part with her.

By the time they reached the little mountain cabin, the sick man had recovered consciousness, and feebly held out his hand to Mr. Porter while he patted Lidy's cheek with the other as she knelt beside him. When the doctor arrived he pronounced it a case of mountain fever.

"Evidently he has been coming down with it for some time, from a general run down condition and lack of proper nutrition," he told Mr. Porter outside the door where Lidy could not hear. "Rest and good care and food will bring him through now."

The following morning Joan awakened early and pushed back her window curtains. It was one of those gray misty days of early spring.

"Just right for a canter," she thought, hurry-

ing with her dressing. She thought she was the first one up, but after she had mounted her horse which Tony had ready and waiting, Scott came towards her down the path leading from the garden.

"The first from our garden," he said, holding up a bunch of daffodils to her. "May I join our lady fair? Perhaps I can do something for the old chap, too."

Joan pinned the flowers at her belt, quoting laughingly,

"And now my heart with rapture thrills,
And dances with the daffodils."

"Thank you, kind sir," she said. "That touch of color was just what I wanted, and I am happy to have company this morning. Just look at this world of gray and green we're going into."

Touching their horses with their whips, they galloped away at a pace that made Tony scratch his head and meditate. All at once the morning sunshine burst through the clouds, and all the valley and lifting mountain crests were bathed in it.

"That's what I call glorious," exclaimed Scott, impetuously. "A regular Midas touch, isn't it?"

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I believe if he wanted to, he could turn everything to gold."

Up the mountain road they went more slowly, pausing now and then to turn back and admire the view, but at last they came in sight of the little cabin, almost hidden behind some tall poplars, slim and radiant in their springtime green.

While Scott hitched the horses, Joan stooped to pick violets. The ground in the yard was thick with them and the air heavy with their dewy fragrance.

"Lidy has the loveliest violets around here," said Joan; "just smell them, Scott. Aren't they sweet?"

Lidy saw them from the little side window and came running out, eager to welcome them. She had been counting the minutes, she said, until they came.

"How's Pappy this morning?" asked Joan, slipping her arm around the girl's stooping shoulders.

"Well, he ain't so bad as he was," Lidy replied hopefully, "but he ain't well yet. The doctor says he will get along all right, though. It's mountain fever."

She pushed open the door. Within the cabin was as neat as wax. On the old marble topped table near the bed was a china bowl filled with

violets. The breeze blew in at the open window, fluttering the crisp muslin curtains, and the room was filled with the fresh spring sunshine.

“It’s not as nice as it ought to be,” apologized Lidy. “I haven’t had time to do everything yet.”

Then Joan had a surprise. Out in the kitchen was Aunt Phrony busily engaged in making broth for Pappy. As she brought him in a steaming cupful, he tried to rise and Scott stepped quickly to the bed, lifting him and supporting the wasted figure as he took a few mouthfuls.

Pappy had always liked the two boys, Scott and Jack, and before he had gone away to Tennessee, had often stopped to talk over with them the best places to fish and hunt in. He gave Scott a grateful look now, and sank back on the pillows with a sigh of relief, looking up at Joan’s bright face.

“You all have been mighty good to me and mine,” he said, weakly. “I—I ain’t going to keep my girls away from you no more.”

Lidy patted him tenderly, and as he dozed away into sleep, they tiptoed out of the room into the sunlight.

“One thing that Mother told me to tell you, Lidy,” said Joan as Scott held her horse for her

to mount, "you must go on with your letters even if Pappy is ill, and she will leave Aunt Phrony here to take care of him." Then, as Lidy opened her mouth to plead and expostulate, "Not a word. You needn't worry one minute about him. You can run over every afternoon and visit with him. There are only a few more weeks of school, and we have just set our hearts on your being promoted."

Lidy's face was aglow with happy willingness. She had been so ambitious to get on with her studies, and now that Pappy was out of danger, it would have been a real calamity to have stopped at this time.

Riding homeward, Scott said suddenly,

"Joan, I can't make Pappy out at all. I never thought he had it in him to feel real gratitude and thank you the way he did in there. I don't believe he'd object at all, to any plans for the children's good, do you?"

"I do hope not," Joan replied, earnestly. "Mother wants to educate Lidy, and Cousin John has written to some great specialist, and made all arrangements for a new examination and consultation over Happy Day's eyesight."

"Maybe he'll consent. He's fond of them in his way, and he always seems to be proud because,

as he says, their 'Maw' was 'edicated.' Perhaps the old chap'll behave now that he's been marched straight up to death's door, and made to read the sign on it." When they had reached home, he added, "Let's ride over again soon, and see how he's getting on."

Just as the doctor had predicted, good care and nourishing food proved to be the best medicine, and before long Pappy was up and out of doors again, although it was apparent to all his days of wandering were over.

As the weather grew warm and balmy, it was not long before he was out with Happy Day most of the time, gentleness itself to both her and Lidy. He asked the latter about her studies, something he had never referred to before, and never seemed weary of hearing the "little 'un," as he called her, tell him how she was learning to do such pretty things, and was so happy with all the other children and their teachers at the blind school in Staunton.

Gradually he took to wandering in the woods near by, and there was scarcely a bird that would not answer his call. He would sit for hours on an old broken down fence, whittling away at a piece of willow for a whistle, watching for Lidy to come home. Over in the woods was another favorite spot, an old clearing where he would

build a fire and roast a potato or couple of apples for his luncheon, would lie on the ground with the roots of a tree for a pillow, idly dreaming away half the afternoon. He and Aunt Johnny had always been great friends, and Pappy would talk to her as to no one else, all about his wanderings, and "Maw" and the children. Once he hinted mysteriously to her of some papers he had found on his trip to Tennessee, but when she gently questioned him, he lapsed into silence and never again alluded to the subject.

Sometimes he would walk down as far as Hill-view, and on these occasions, Mrs. Clayton always invited him to have luncheon in the house, but he preferred to eat his sandwiches and drink his coffee or lemonade out of doors. Once, however, Joan saw him standing in the large lower hall, gazing up at the portrait of the son who had broken his father's heart. He started guiltily when he saw her, and hurried out of doors in spite of her greeting.

Bob and Margie never tired of following him around, watching with fascinated interest while he made bird houses. Some he fastened in the forks of the trees, others swung from branches, so the birds could take their choice. And he knew just what sort of a house each bird liked best, too. Jack said there never were any "To

Let" signs on Pappy's houses. They were too much in demand.

"And they've got real doors and windows and little porches, Joan," Margie told her eagerly. "He marked one Robin Villa, and another Oriole Inn, and another is Bluebird Manor. Isn't that funny?"

One day he came down, bringing a canary for Margie, a pretty, slim little thing that sang hour after hour in its cage on the sunny back porch, but one day the door was left ajar, and it flew back to woodland.

"Maybe it's just as well," said Margie, with a sigh, "because Valentine's had one eye on it for days, and I knew she was just waiting her chance to chew it up."

Pappy, very characteristically, said nothing when he was told of the flyaway, but two weeks later he appeared with a pair of birds, and this time he fixed the cage himself. Margie was a very faithful little mistress to them, never failing to see that there was fresh plantain in their cage, and fresh spring water in their tubs. It was such fun to watch them as they splashed about and then stood on the perches, preening their ruffled feathers.

Joan named them Peep and Bo Peep, and they were great company for each other. And

after awhile Pappy twisted a wire framework for a nest and wound cotton about its side, "just to start them right," he told Margie, who watched every movement he made. So Bo Peep became a real motherly little housewife, and was busy for days putting the finishing touches to her nest. Peep played the part of a devoted mate, too, bringing her bits of cotton and straws, and helping all he could by singing joyously to her as she sat on the nest. And at last one morning, Margie nearly went wild with joy, when she found three little speckled eggs in the nest. Peep was far too interested now to sing. He spent his days perched right beside the nest, feeding his mate titbits that Margie provided. After three weeks, the birds were hatched, and four scrawny naked little things stretched up their necks, and opened wide their mouths for food. Jack declared that Margie went around showing more pride and delight in them than even the little motherbird herself.

As spring advanced, Mr. Osgood often drove over in his car, and took them out on long trips through the beautiful mountain roads around Hillview. Once he brought little Jean with him to spend the week end with Margie. She had always made her home in the city, and country life was a revelation to her. Joan would take



IT WAS SUCH FUN TO WATCH THEM AS THEY SPLASHED ABOUT

them for long walks down by the brook, hunting for spring wild flowers, and explaining each kind to Jean, for Margie knew them by heart.

"Don't it all smell woodsy and nice," said Jean, sniffing the air with her little tiptilted nose. In a moment, though, she dropped down on the ground beside Margie with a delighted cry, as they found the first bloodroot, and then Joan called to them that she had found a patch of anemones, delicate and dainty in pale pink and lavender. It was like fairyland here in the glen where the brook widened. They could just see the patches of blue sky overhead through the interlacing branches.

Joan pushed aside the dead leaves in search of ferns, the small ones that are the charm of Virginia woods, and crying out as she uncovered the tiny brown curled frond sheaths,

"Here they are, girlies, see? All curled up like little tight fingers, ready to unfold when their call comes from Mother Nature. We'll take some of these home and plant them close to the house."

She was digging at the fern roots with an old knife, when suddenly Jean whispered fearfully,

"Somebody's knocking somewhere."

They listened intently, and sure enough, on a tree close by, there came again the sharp little

"rat-a-tat-tat." Joan stepped softly around to where they could look up.

"See," she whispered softly, too, "it's a woodpecker; Johnny Red Cap, Theo and I used to call him down home."

"He doesn't need Pappy's help to build himself a house," said Margie, "does he? He's a carpenter himself."

Farther down they heard a sweet "twitter, twitter," from a bush where some young birds were learning to fly.

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Jean, anxiously, "the mother just pushed one little fellow right straight off the nest. Do you think he can get back by himself?"

The baby thrush spread his brown wings desperately, but only fell back on the ground again and again, while his mother scolded him from the bush. Finally she got a nice fat worm, and flew back and forth with it, holding it just out of reach, and the birdling balanced his wings more carefully this time, and fluttered awkwardly up to the nest.

"Now, isn't that a lesson in 'try, try againness,' " laughed Joan.

"It's lots harder for him to fly than it is for the baby canaries," Margie returned, "'cause they have perches to help them."

They played around until they were tired, and then begged for a story, so Joan seated herself at the foot of an old oak, and asked what it should be.

"Jack and the Beanstalk, or the Legend of the Springtime?"

"The Springtime," said both the children at once, and Joan began,

"Once long ago, when the world was young, in far off Greece there lived a little girl named Proserpine. Her mother was Ceres, the goddess of the harvest, and one day when she was away, Proserpine was gathering shells along the shore, when Pluto, god of the underworld, sprang out of the earth in a dark chariot drawn by two black horses, seized her, and vanished suddenly as he had come into the ground."

"Why didn't she just scream and scream?" asked Jean, interestedly.

"I think she did, but nobody was near to hear and save her. And when Ceres returned, she searched everywhere distractedly for her precious child. Finally a mountain stream told her out of pity, for it had listened to her weeping and pitiful cries for days. It said it had seen Proserpine down in the dark regions of Pluto's kingdom, and that he had made her his queen."

"Really and truly did he?" demanded Margie

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eagerly. Being made a queen was compensation for almost anything, she thought. "Did her mother find her?"

"Yes, she found her at last," answered Joan, "and she begged so hard that Pluto consented at last to let her spend one half of each year with her mother and the remaining half with him. So she visits her mother in spring and summer, and all the world is glad. The flowers bloom and the birds sing again—"

And here Margie, who had heard the story often and loved it dearly, interrupted,

"And when she goes back to Pluto, winter comes again, and all the flowers die."

"If we could see her in time, maybe we could coax her to stay up in the sunshine all the time," Jean suggested wisely, and Joan laughed at both of them. They sat throwing pebbles in the brook for a long time, watching the widening circles until the lengthening rays of the sun, warned them it was time to go home if they were going to plant ferns before dinner.

Hand in hand they strolled, stopping still to pick spring beauties, or make chains of the daisies that dotted the fields. The words of a poem her mother had once taught her came back to Joan, and slowly, as if quoting only to herself, she repeated them:

"Over the meadows with daisies strewn,
When the birds are singing their gayest tune,
Out in the meadows, over the hill,
The children followed their own sweet will.

"Picking buttercups, stopping to rest,
Seeing which one loved butter the best,
Talking gayly of childish plays,
Thinking of nothing but sweet spring days."

Reaching home, they all went out to Margie's playhouse to plant the ferns under the old apple tree. Jean had dug up some wildflowers, too, and Bob helped them put in blood root, anemones and adder's tongue beside the funny Jack in the Pulpits and ferns. After the girls had arranged a border of round stones, Margie suggested with a sigh of relief,

"Let's call it our fairyland, and who knows, maybe some of the fairies will really find it out."

And so the springtime passed, and summer advanced. Light showers fell protectingly on the little wild garden. The old apple tree held its gnarled branches over it protectingly. April passed into May, and before they knew it, June came and summer was close at hand.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRIP ACROSS THE CONTINENT

IT WAS a triumphal procession that finally arrived at the little railroad station to see the travelers off on their journey, one bright morning in June. In spite of all Theo and Joan's careful planning, there was a rush and flurry right at the last. When Tony came upstairs with the expressman to strap up the baggage, Joan missed her trunk key, and it was only after a frantic search through pockets and bureau drawers that it finally was found in the bird-cage.

"Now how on earth—" began Joan when she caught sight of Margie's eyes brimming over with tears.

"I—I found it in Mother's work-basket the other day, and put it in there so I'd be sure and remember it for you, Joan," she whispered, her arms clasped fast around big sister's neck.

Then a bottle of red ink was discovered upside down on Helen's table and her fresh linen traveling blouse seemed hopelessly ruined, when all

others were packed. She was running around crying and wringing her hands over the wreck.

"Oh, I can't go. I haven't another thing to wear!"

But Lidy ran down to Aunt Phrony and between them they got the spots out of the waist and restored it fresh and clean.

"You're a darling, Lidy," Helen declared, joyfully. "I'm going to send for you one of these days, just see if I don't, and have you come out and spend a whole winter with us."

As they were fairly started Scott discovered he had forgotten his kodak and raced back after it, and Joan caught sight of Violet Isabella coming on a dead run for the station, just as the train came into sight around the curve, waving something.

"Hyar's your hairbrush, Miss Joan!" she called, and Joan thanked her laughingly.

And just as though this were not enough diversion, Bob was suddenly missed. Even Mr. Porter looked anxious as the trainmen put on the baggage, and the engine gave a warning whistle, but Bob "bobbed up serenely" as Jack said, at the very last moment, breathless and excited.

"I only stopped to give Prince a last hug," he said. "It seems most as if I couldn't bear to

leave him. Tony! you will take good care of him, won't you?"

He hung out of the car window, shouting injunctions, and Tony called back earnestly,

"'Deed an' I will, Marse Bob. I tink jes' as much of dat pony as you do yo' sef. He ain't gwine ter suffer. You keep yo' comfort on dat."

"Isn't that funny?" Helen said. "I hope we'll all 'keep our comfort' by the time we land there."

Joan and Helen had never looked better, Theo told her mother as they stood on the platform, looking up at the happy faces. Helen had a new traveling suit of black and white check, and Joan's was a dark blue serge with a pretty pongee tailored waist, dark red silk tie, and dark blue hat with an oriole's wing on one side, just showing the flash of red beneath.

As the very last call sounded, Helen, her arms full of roses that Hunter Harrison had sent her as a parting gift, solemnly pledged Theo all over again to write often, every time anything of interest happened on the coast, while Jack held his twin's hand at her window, his other arm around his mother.

"Oh, I wish you were going too," Joan exclaimed, the tears falling fast now. "Jack, take care of Mother *sure*."

"Sure," he promised warmly. "Don't worry.

My turn's coming. Send plenty of postcards. You'll find a letter from me when you get out there."

"All aboard!" shouted the colored porter as a final warning, and still they all called out farewell admonitions.

"If I decide to go to the University of California, Jack," Scott yelled from the window, "you've got to come, too. Don't worry about Joan. I'll look after her."

"Good-by, everybody," Helen said last of all. "Oh, dear, I feel as if I had left half of my heart behind me."

Joan was crying and still she had to laugh at the tragic tone. Theo had pressed a bottle of smelling salts into her hand at the last minute, and she held it under Helen's nose now.

"You need it more than I do," she said. "I never faint."

"Oh, but Joan, aren't partings awful?"

"Dreadful, but just remember for every parting is a meeting at the other end, and be happy."

Margie had given each of them a box of chocolates, repeating solemnly the admonition she so often received herself,

"Be careful and don't eat them all at once, or you'll be sick."

After they were settled for the first part of

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the journey, the precious new hats protected by paper bags, Joan opened the little package that contained Jack's parting gift. It was a history of the missions in California, with a newspaper clipping giving in full the story of Santa Barbara.

"Isn't this just like Jack," she exclaimed. "Cousin John, can we possibly stop off at Santa Barbara?"

"Rather," he answered. "We couldn't pass that by. Why, you'll get your first glimpse of the old missions there, and by the way, you must watch out for the old road made by the padres. It runs very close to the Southern Pacific tracks."

They were to go on to St. Louis, then change to the Burlington to Denver, through scenic Colorado to Salt Lake City, where they would make their first stop over. From there on, the tickets read straight to San Francisco by the Southern Pacific. A more varied trip could not have been planned for, Mr. Porter said.

After Bob had thoroughly explored the Pullman, boy fashion, and made friends with all the passengers, a dear old lady told him her big boy Allan, had been just such a little chap as he was now. Then there was a baby across the aisle who stopped crying as soon as he made some of his

most fascinating grimaces at her. Bob prided himself on being able to look like either Violet Isabella's favorite ghost, or a Chinese war mask. But all this palled pretty soon, and he flattened his nose against the window pane in his anxiety to miss nothing of the passing landscape.

They left Washington far behind, and Virginia, too. Joan loved the scenery through West Virginia, and on into Kentucky. The first day passed like a dream, but the second one they were ready to settle down as old experienced travelers, cutting through the lower part of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and finally reaching St. Louis. It was sunset when they passed over the great Eads bridge, and the whole city lay in a violet shadow with the orange sky beyond.

Here the first change of cars came, and they took the Burlington road on to Denver. After St. Louis was left behind, the long overland train wound its way over the great prairies. There were fields of corn, wheat, and other grain reaching as far as the eye could see. Far to the blue rim of the horizon line, it lay like an ocean of lifting billows, waving back and forth as the breeze swept it. Most of the fields were still green, but here and there, they passed reapers and harvesters at work where the yellowing grain showed it was ready for harvest.

The girls and Scott never tired of watching the great machines passing to and fro, finally dropping the bundles of wheat. They seemed almost human in their direction. Only an occasional house could be seen in the midst of these miles of prairie land.

"Just think of living way out here in the winter," Helen said with a shudder. She was as bad as a cat, Scott often declared, loving warm fires and soft cushions.

"I believe I'd like it," Joan replied, cheerfully; "for a while anyway, if I could only have Jack with me, and plenty of books to read."

"S'posing a tornado was to come along," asked Bob, gravely, "what would you do, then?"

"Trot right straight down into our cyclone cellar and stay till it was all over."

"Humph," grunted Bob. "You wouldn't do much reading down there in the dark. Guess you'd wish you were back in Virginia then."

Presently Scott called across the aisle,

"Say, folkses, better keep a lookout for prairie dogs. Here's where they abide, you know."

Bob's nose flattened against the window pane immediately, and before long he was rewarded.

"I see some," he called out eagerly. "Cousin John, I saw some, only they ran into their holes

when the train went by, so I couldn't be sure."

But soon there were plenty to be seen, standing upright on little mounds of earth that indicated their burrows. Such bright-eyed, saucy little fellows they were, hardly as large as small rabbits, and their short sharp barks could be heard occasionally above the din of the train.

The next morning Bob put his head out of his berth to ask casually if the train was on time, and the porter replied,

"Yes, suh, jes' on time, suh. It's mos' seven o'clock. Anything you feel like wantin'?"

"But my watch says eight o'clock." Bob sat up very suddenly, and shook his cherished watch to find out if it had stopped.

"Oh, dat's Eastern time, suh. We changed now to Western. We're 'bout an hour behind what we was yesterday."

Bob was completely mystified, and altogether unbelieving.

"How can time get changed?" he asked Joan, who looked out of the curtains in her section across the aisle. "Did the conductor do it, Joan? It's a whole hour now till breakfast."

Even Joan could not tell him all the whys and wherefores about the change, but when Mr. Porter came through from the observation platform, he explained it all, Eastern, Central and Rocky

Mountain time. Still Bob never got quite used to it, and would say ruefully after that,

"I'll never know any more when I go to bed what may happen to my watch before I wake up."

Far beyond the wide stretches of prairie they could distinguish now the first outlines of mountain ranges, so far away they seemed like great shadowy clouds. Eagerly the travelers watched them until gradually the separate peaks assumed form and stood out boldly against the clear sky.

It was Joan who spoke first.

"Just think," she cried, "there are actually the Rockies! Don't you remember, Scott, the funny little marks in our geographies that we always tried to copy on our maps?"

"Like a six-legged ant's track in the snow," laughed Scott. "Gee, I wonder if that big fellow's Pike's Peak. I'd like to climb that one."

"You'd find it a pretty big pull up," said Mr. Porter. "That particular peak is about 14,000 feet high, and they say that Pike himself was afraid to undertake it. There's a cog road now, way to the top and the view is wonderful. As you look off one way nothing but the great plains over which we have just come, lie in a vast panorama, and westward are hundreds of mountains fairly crowding each other."

"It must be glorious," Joan said, enthusiastically. "I'd want to climb every one of them, though."

"You can, Joan," Bob assured her sagely. "On funny little burros with long ears."

It was a great relief when they finally reached Denver. Here they had a full hour between train connections. They had made but few stops on the way West, and as Scott said, his feet fairly begged to be trotted up and down something besides an aisle. The first thing to do was mail the postcards and letters they had written along the way.

Helen counted them as Bob dropped them in the box. The first ones were all for "Mother."

"And a card from Scott to his father. Santa Monica? Is that where we're going? Here we are, Helen, way off side of Pike's Peak, sending postcards to Virginia and California, too."

"Hurry up," called Mr. Porter, breaking in on Bob's reflections, "if you all want to take a street car ride and see Denver."

When their hour was up they boarded the Rio Grande train much refreshed and feeling quite like old time travelers. The ride up to Salt Lake City was doubly enjoyed for the little break in the monotony of the journey. Even going through the desert thrilled them, with the miles of

sand dotted with pink, yellow and white cactus flowers.

"I guess Margie would be interested if she could just take a look at all of those flowers. Aunt Johnny's cactus wouldn't look like much out here," Bob said over and over again.

When the train stopped at Palmer Lake, the air came in through the windows, deliciously fresh and cool. Mr. Porter smiled as he watched Joan's face, when she leaned out, breathing in deep whiffs of it at the station.

"Like it, girlie?" he asked.

"It's wonderful, Cousin John," said Joan, with a happy sigh. "The only trouble is, I can't make it seem real yet. We go so fast through everything. I wish I could make the trip in a gypsy cart."

Passing Pueblo, the road began to climb higher. As they neared the mountains, the scenery grew more rugged and varied. Bob reminded the conductor at least a dozen times that he wanted to be sure and see the Mount of the Holy Cross. So, in due time, they all hurried out on the observation platform for the best view of its great snow covered arms, and there they stayed for the rest of the afternoon, as the engine puffed its way up through the most dangerous places.

Joan stood with wide eyes of amazement. Never had she ever dreamt of such bewildering beauty. Past snow covered peaks, through the marvelous canyon of the Arkansas, into the Royal Gorge where granite walls seemed to meet above their heads in an arcade; on and on, past dashing cascades, over rushing rapids, on trestles that made one dizzy even to think of, on and on, whirling through the Canyon of the Grand, climbing up and up again by sharp curves, around precipitous rocks where it seemed as if their train must topple over into the chasm.

In the midst of it all Bob gave a sudden lunge, and Mr. Porter caught him by his coat.

"Now then, young man, do you want to be a small grease spot a few thousand feet down there?"

"Oh, Bob," cried Joan, "I thought surely you were going over."

"It wasn't exactly me that was going over," said Bob, seriously. "It was my hat. And it's gone, too, back there."

"Well, you'll never see it again," Scott declared. "Some day it will be discovered, and they'll say a very small prospector died of exposure in that awful gulch, Bob. Now, you'll have to tie one of my handkerchiefs over your head all the rest of the trip."

Bob looked a little sheepish as he replied, thoughtfully,

"I s'pose I ought to have held on to it, but how can a fellow think of hats when he's looking at the Royal Gorge?"

"Never mind, little 'brud,'" said Joan, patting him lovingly. "We'll find lots of hats in Salt Lake City."

"It's a good thing this scenery can't go on forever like the brook," Helen exclaimed, as she fastened her hair up for the seventeenth time. "I've sprinkled the Royal Gorge with hairpins in loving remembrance of myself, and my head's fairly splitting, I've seen so much. I feel as if I were turning into one big exclamation point."

"Never mind. There isn't much to see excepting sand after we pass Glenwood," Mr. Porter assured her. "I advise you all to tumble into your berths early to-night and be ready for a day of sight-seeing in Salt Lake City to-morrow."

It was a long, hot night over the western portion of Utah. Joan roused herself to glance out from time to time. The Rockies had been left behind. It was a dreary waste land in the moonlight, with only sage brush and occasional mesquite bushes to break the monotony of the desert. Towards daybreak, she saw great glowing fires here and there over the vast desert sands, and

wondered dreamily how sand could be on fire. But in the morning Cousin John told her they were coke ovens where the coke was made to be used in smelting the ores from the mines.

Next morning it was dry and dusty. Even Helen was up early, excited over the prospect of reaching Salt Lake City about 10.30. Joan and she were sitting together, Helen, deep in a pamphlet describing the beauties of the great temple, and Joan trying to trace out a guide to the city. Across the aisle Scott was telling Bob he mustn't mind their missing seeing a real live coyote, because he'd take him for a plunge in Great Salt Lake where the water was so buoyant, you could float and eat your dinner if you wanted to, from a nice, handy, water-proof tray.

Suddenly Joan exclaimed,

"Isn't it the oddest thing," and then she read aloud, " 'The topography of Utah is very much like that of Palestine, Utah Lake corresponding to the Sea of Galilee, while the Jordan River connects it with Great Salt Lake which closely resembles the Dead Sea of the Holy Land.' Isn't that strange, though?"

Just then Mr. Porter leaned over the back of the seat and asked,

"Does any one want to go down in a mine with me?"

"Oh, Cousin John," cried Joan. "Could we? Do stop jumping up and down so, Bob."

"I think it could be arranged," said Mr. Porter. "We could take a sightseeing car around the city this morning, then go through the Temple grounds, and after lunch run out to the lake. That would leave us free for a trip the next day, what do you say? We may have to stay overnight, but there are good accommodations to be had at the mining camp."

"A night in a mining camp," Scott said. "Gee, I wish Jack were here."

"Never mind, we'll write him everything we see," Joan declared, happily. "Think of going right down in a mine, Helen."

"I'd rather think of coming right up out of it into daylight again," laughed Helen.

Soon the train brought them into sight of the great Wasatch and Oquirrh ranges, their snowy peaks towering into the sky. The desert had given place now to irrigated lands and broad spreading orchards of many varieties of fruits. Passing along the Jordan River, tall Lombardy poplars in the distance made one think of pictures of Italy. The spires of the Temple rose majestically into view, and in a few moments more they were in the City of the Saints.

CHAPTER VII

THE KNIGHT OF THE MINES

BOB had become completely addicted to a guide book. He kept one firmly tucked under his arm for ready reference all the time, and read aloud to the rest of the party at every chance he got so as to be sure they didn't miss anything. While they waited in a store for his new straw hat to be selected, Bob ran over some of the city's charms to the tourist.

"Great rock ribbed mountains, purple shadowed, snow crested, cool, vast canyons, clear water brought by mountain stream, broad, well shaded streets, handsome residences, and everywhere a general air of—of—what's that, Joan?"

"Prosperity," prompted Joan. "Tuck that away now. We're going for a ride round the whole place. Cousin John says we can even go through the Temple grounds, and listen to an organ recital at the tabernacle, although I don't see where we're going to squeeze it in."

"I'm going to take bunches of pictures, and you girls can fix up 'Memory Books' to send back

to Virginia," Scott said. "I want to catch the Beehive House, Eagle Gate, and I don't know what all."

Mr. Porter telephoned Rodney Stark, a young mining engineer, who was to take them on a personal tour of the mines, and came back to them smiling.

"It's all right. Rodney will meet us at the depot to-morrow morning at eight. You girls want to dress well for the trip, but don't wear your hearts on your sleeve, I warn you."

"Do Virginia girls usually do that?" asked Joan, teasingly, but with a touch of pride underlying her words, as he pinched her cheek amusedly. "Indeed we won't lose our hearts to any knight of the mines, Cousin John."

"Wait till you see him," laughed Mr. Porter. "Get ready now for your afternoon at the lake."

On the way out to Saltair, they saw miles of salt beds where the water was pumped and left to evaporate for commercial purposes, five barrels of water making one barrel of salt, as Bob informed them gravely.

"If we only had a little more time, we could get enough to last Mother forever," he added, regretfully.

Nearer the lake, countless seagulls could be

seen, circling about in the air, and skimming over the surface of the water.

"I don't believe any of you heard the story of the birds," Joan said, eagerly. "While the rest of you were talking about the acoustics back there in the Temple, and listening to a pin drop, I was interested in what a guide was telling somebody else about the crickets and the gulls."

"Oh, tell it, Joan," begged Bob, "and I'll write it back to Margie. She loves birds."

"Well, then, nowhere in all the world is the gull prized so highly as right here in Utah. Way back, I think he said 1848, there was a plague of crickets and all the crops would have been completely destroyed if it hadn't been for the gulls. They flew inland in great flocks and devoured the crickets continuously for six days and nights so at the end of the time not a single one was left."

"Glad they didn't get as far as Virginia," Bob said stoutly. "I like crickets. Bet a cookie those gulls had awful indigestion."

"Indigestion, goosie," corrected Joan. "It is true, the guide said, and the people held a great thanksgiving service, so from that time the gulls were protected by law. They have nests on one of the islands over there in the lake, and are just as tame as can be."

"Well, I don't blame the people for loving them," Helen declared emphatically. "I think they are beautiful, too. I love the sweep of their wings."

"Look over there," Scott said suddenly; "this lake's seventy miles long, they say, but once it spread out over the whole valley. You can see the shore line still along the base of the mountains. Just wait till we're floating on it."

The boys were in the water first. Joan and Helen came down from the pavilion presently in their pretty new suits, designed for the beach at California, their hair tucked up under silk oil-skin caps.

"Come on," called Scott. "You just float, that's all. You can't sink at all."

Joan was a little timid at first. It seemed too good to be true that you could really float even when you didn't know how to swim at all, but Scott helped her, and she found herself buoyed up completely by the heavy salt water.

"Wish I could read a book and float, too," spluttered Bob at her side, peering up with his chin in the water to look at a man who was doing that very thing and a friend with him complacently smoking a cigar. "That must be a—a—remarkable experience."

After their plunge in the lake, they lingered

until the sun was setting, the sky overhead a mass of copper colored clouds, the mountain peaks standing out like mystical islands in deep red and purple tints.

The floor of the pavilion was crowded with dancers, for Saltair is the playground of the people. In the cool twilight, the lake lay very still, a strange, silent sheet of water, dead beneath the starlit sky.

They all slept very soundly that night, so soundly in fact that Bob utterly refused to respond until Scott shook him vigorously, calling, "You've got to hurry now, young man."

Bob opened his eyes sleepily, only to close them and inquire with dignity, "Is the train on time, Porter?"

Scott laughed heartily. "The train's on time all right, and if you don't hurry up, you'll miss the trip to the mines."

Bob jumped at the magical word "mines," scrambled out of bed, and hurried into his clothes.

Reaching the station, they found Mr. Stark already there. He was a good looking young man of about twenty-two or three, nearly six feet tall, with dark hair and keen blue eyes. He told Scott he had only graduated a year or two before from Cornell, and had come to Utah as offering the best field for his work in mining engineering.

Mr. Porter had known his parents well, and was watching Rodney's career with interest. As he came towards them with outstretched hand, Helen whispered,

"Isn't he nice looking, Joan?" But Joan, the unimpressible, as Jack called her, answered thoughtfully,

"Stark? Stark? Do you suppose he can be descended from Mollie Stark of the Revolutionary Days?"

Scott and Rodney sat together, facing Mr. Porter and Bob, while the girls were across the aisle from them. From time to time the young engineer called their attention to the abandoned claims on the hillsides. Once they caught a fleeting glimpse of an old prospector. He seemed to be getting ready for a trip, Bob said. His burro stood near loaded with a double pack, and he himself carried a pick.

"Wish him luck," said Joan, happily. Then far on, the mines came in view. Rodney pointed out the different ones with a word of explanation in regard to each.

"Those are the big hoisting works you see above the surface," he explained. "Just notice the names. There's many a tragedy hidden behind them."

"I've heard of 'The Last Chance,'" cried Scott,

eagerly. "And there it is now, Joan, over there, see?"

"Yes, and we have 'The Last Show,' and 'The Last Dollar,' to say nothing of 'The Nightmare,' and 'The Humbug.' Are you sure, Miss Clayton, that you and Miss Helen will be able to climb that hill?"

"I'd be ashamed of Virginia endurance if we couldn't," Joan replied merrily.

There was one long street that ran up through the gulch. A maze of telephone and electric power lines crisscrossed between the various mines. The two boys went on ahead with Rodney to see that all arrangements were made for the trip underground. It was a long hard pull uphill, and even Joan was out of breath when they reached the top. Scott awaited them with a motley collection of garments hanging over his arm.

"Canvas coats for the girls, and overalls for the rest of us," he explained. "Put these caps on too, Helen, you and Joan, and pull them down over your ears."

"Wouldn't Hunter Harrison's roses go prettily with this costume," Helen laughed, as she fastened her coat, and pulled her cap down on one side boyishly.

"Just hold that pose, please," Scott demanded.

"I expect to make a sensation with my snapshots when I get back, and I need that one. We'll call it, 'Fascination, thy name is Helen.'"

"Ready?" asked Rodney, coming up with a supply of queer looking things that looked like spikes turned into candlesticks. One end was sharp and pointed, but in the handle was a place for a candle. "Here are your 'miner's candlesticks,' one for each of you. You may keep them if you like, as souvenirs of the trip. We need them for light underground."

The girls looked a little bit tense and close lipped as they held their skirts close about them, and crowded into the cage. There were seven in all, crowded like sardines, all facing the same way, and each holding to the cross bars above their heads. Down, down they dropped, at one time passing a lighted station, then into darkness again. Bob who was too short to reach the bars, held fast to Joan, whispering breathlessly,

"What if we slipped right through to China!"

At last the cage slowed down, and the guide led the way out from the lighted station. In contrast, it seemed as if they were plunging into pitch darkness, save for the little flickering light from the candlesticks. Joan never forgot the weirdness of that journey, twenty-five hundred feet beneath the surface of the earth. Now, they

passed long, black passages broken only by places where a few men were working, preparing to blast the rock, or else sampling for ore with queer little picks. Then Rodney led them into a recess at one side while a patient mule passed, drawing cars loaded high with rock.

As they progressed, they each accumulated small specimens, which he explained. Some showed flecks of gold and some of silver. A red stain, they learned, indicated iron, and bluish green the existence of copper. It took experience to even guess at these values, he added. One of the most frequent and hopeless phases of the mining life was the number of people who gave their lives to a hopeless quest and never struck ore. Joan remembered the old prospector they had seen when they entered the city, and wondered if he would make a lucky strike some day.

"I'd like to show you a 'stope' or place the ore has been taken from if you can climb the ladder," he said, looking doubtfully at the two girls.

"Indeed we will climb it," Helen answered, eagerly. "I don't want to miss a single thing, do you, Joan?"

After all, it was not nearly so hard as it looked, and they even found they could hold their candles as they climbed, by sticking them into the side of the shaft until they could draw themselves up

higher. And it was well worth the effort, for up at the top they found themselves in an immense chamber, where any number of miners were at work, some knocking down ore, some with their hand picks, and others using light power drills.

Here was their first resting place, and Rodney produced a bag of gingersnaps and a miner's water bottle, which looked like a canvas bag, but was made after the same principle as a thermos bottle. And hungry as wolves they all were.

"I never thought gingersnaps could taste so good," said Joan fervently.

"I'd eat fried doormat down here and think it was great," sighed Bob, as he put away his tenth "snap." Rodney smiled as he looked at his watch.

"It doesn't seem so, I know, but we've been down about two hours now, and there's lots more I want you to see before you go. Can you stand it?"

"Not much longer," warned Mr. Porter. "I think for the first trip, they've been down about long enough."

So climbing back into the cage by the flickering candle light, they went to the top with a whizz and a whirr that made Bob's eyes bulge, and were soon up in the open air again. It was several minutes before they could accustom their eyes to

the brilliant daylight. Joan looked up at the sky, and rubbed her eyes, exclaiming,

"What's that castle over there?"

"Castle? Castle?" repeated Scott, turning around and around. "Our lady fair hath lost her mind."

"You're dreaming, Joan. Wake up," Helen teased, but Mr. Porter shaded his eyes and stared up at the clouds, too.

"Bless my soul," he said, "it's a mirage. I saw one once before on a trip west, years ago. What you see, Joan, are really reflections on the clouds of great castellated rocks many miles from here."

"If this isn't the funniest trip," Bob remarked seriously. "First we're way under ground seeing things out of sight, and when we come up we see things in the sky that aren't here at all. It's a topsyturvy place out here, I think."

When they had rested a little Rodney took them through one of the big mills and showed them how the rock was crushed and the precious metals extracted. They watched it as it came pulverized through the screens, the gold being caught on copper plates. The next stopping place was the assay office where the value of the ore was determined by the most delicate scales, after passing through the fire in the furnace and muffle.

Finally, it was over, the long day of wonders and surprises. As they parted at the hotel entrance Mr. Parker shook hands with Rodney heartily and thanked him.

"We all owe you a vote of appreciation. I've had as much fun out of it all as Bob."

"It's been an immense pleasure to me, sir," Rodney responded. "I look forward to showing you the smelters at Salt Lake to-morrow."

The day had been so full of events that it was not until they were alone in their room that night that Helen said,

"How spooky it was down there in the dark, and wasn't he splendid the way he helped us and led the way!"

"Who?" asked Joan, absent mindedly, as she sat curled up on the foot of the bed in her kimono, mending a glove.

"You know perfectly well, Joan Clayton, who I mean. If it hadn't been for him I should have died of fright down in that black hole."

"Let's call him," Joan exclaimed with sudden inspiration, "Our Knight of the Mines. He certainly led us through mighty perilous adventures."

Later, as they were dropping off to sleep, Helen said dreamily,

"I wonder if the smelter will be as interesting as the mines?"

"Go to sleep, goose," Joan responded, briskly. "You know you'd think anything was interesting if you had your knight there to guide you."

But the following morning, just as they were hurrying to catch the train back to the city, Helen wrenched her ankle as she stepped from the sidewalk.

"It isn't anything at all," she cried, but her face was pale from the sharp twinges of pain. Scott picked her up bodily and carried her to the train, and while it turned out to be just a severe sprain, still it laid her up at the hotel while the others went to the smelter.

"Isn't that just my luck?" she moaned. "To think of climbing all through that mine and then to fall over a splinter in a sidewalk. Don't mind me one bit. It was all my own fault not looking where I was going."

"Better let me stay here with you," Joan begged. "I'm tired anyway, Helen, and I'd just as soon as not. I'll only worry about you if I go."

"No," Helen replied firmly. "It's good for me. I need discipline, goodness knows. If I'm such a duffer I'll have to suffer the consequences, that's all." She waved her hand, trying to smile pluckily.

All the long afternoon she lay on the couch by

the open window, dozing and thinking of the pain in spite of herself, and at last five o'clock came and brought Joan back.

"You poor old pal, you," she exclaimed, throwing her hat and jacket on the bed, "I thought of you every single minute. Oh, Helen, it was wonderful, the way they melted up the rock and all the metal came pouring out, a perfect stream of fire. It made me think of all the stories I had read of the black dwarfs and how they carried bags of gold into the mountains and melted them in the fiery furnaces. Oh, yes, and Mr. Stark, the 'knight,' you know," teasingly, "gave us each a nugget of gold as a souvenir. Here is yours, with his best remembrances." She held it out, an oddly shaped lump of gold that Bob had declared looked just like a chewed piece of gum only nice and golden. Bob's metaphors were always somewhat mixed. "It isn't fair either," added Joan. "He's shown partiality because yours is the prettiest."

Helen smiled, almost forgetting her pain.

"He *is* nice, and it's a beauty," she said. "Won't it make a lovely pendant, Joan?"

"Yes, and every time you look at it, you can remember him."

"Indeed, I won't," Helen laughed ruefully; "I'll remember my sprained ankle. I know that

was a lesson to me to step over the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. I'm going to forget him entirely."

"He said he had a sister out in California," Joan remarked, as if it were an afterthought. "Maybe we'll see him there through the summer. Knights have a way of riding by the same highroad again, they say."

Helen flushed and said nothing more, only looked at the little gold nugget. There are some things that make one forget even a sprained ankle, she thought.

CHAPTER VIII

A TROUT BREAKFAST

"SAN FRANCISCO CALL! Examiner! Chronicle! All the San Francisco papers."

"Gee, we're in California," called Scott, sticking his head out of the car window to watch the newsboys running up and down the platform of the first station after they had crossed the line. "Come on, Bob, let's salute the fair land of the golden west."

It had been a wonderful trip. For two hours the train passed over Great Salt Lake, hundreds of gulls dipping and wheeling on every side in what Helen declared to be the very poetry of motion. Joan had no time for words. It seemed as if all she wanted to do was look and look out of the window at the beauty of it all as the sun sank low in the west and threw a path of gold over the rippling waters of the lake.

But the boys liked the desert best. As they swept across it through Western Utah and Nevada, Bob stared out in speculative marveling.

"Say, Scott," he said happily, "I'll bet it's just

chock-full of skulls and bones and things if we only knew it, don't you?"

Then with the morning, they found themselves at last in California. When the girls had finished dressing and stepped from their berths, they saw some of the passengers locking up suitcases and adjusting veils and hats. Scott came back with the morning papers and news.

"The conductor says lots of people stop over for a few days' fishing at Tahoe. Sounds like a lark to me, trout breakfast at the Tavern. How about it, Bob, old man?"

He tipped Bob over the chair arm, and tickled his ribs persuasively.

"A trout breakfast," exclaimed Joan. "Real fresh trout?"

"Could we catch them our own selves?" Bob asked eagerly.

"Oh, if we only could stop—" Helen paused eloquently, looking at Mr. Porter, who was scanning the headlines. He smiled over the top of his eye-glasses at the appealing faces.

"Well, well, I don't know but what we might," he said. "Our tickets admit stopovers. We'll be a bit later reaching San Francisco. Would you mind that?"

A day later reaching San Francisco would mean a day later getting letters from home, and

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Joan hesitated. She had wakened that morning with the thought of those home letters first in her mind, letters from Jack, from the dear mother, even a line from Margie. But the others were so anxious to stay, it did not seem fair for her to say she did not want to, and Scott hurried to notify the conductor of their change in plans.

In a few moments the train drew up at Truckee, a lumber camp about fifteen miles from the lake, where the little narrow gauge was waiting to take them to Tahoe Tavern. It had been a case of hurry getting their things together at the last minute, but even Joan declared it was worth it when she saw the place.

The hotel stood on a low bluff overlooking the lake and seemed built just to harmonize with the wildness of the surroundings. Outside it was covered with stained shingles and the interior was all unplastered, paneled in softly tinted natural woods. On the floors were spread richly hued Navajo blankets, and everywhere hung the quaintly woven Indian baskets.

"Oh, Joan, we must get some to take back east, please," begged Bob. "Jack would love one of those rugs in his room, wouldn't he, and Mumsey would use the baskets for all kinds of things."

The long dining room was delightful. It seemed as if each window framed a perfect view,

and the chandeliers were stag antlers with tiny electric lights at the tip ends.

"Wouldn't those be dandy in the club?" said Joan, enthusiastically. "Never mind, Bobbie. Wait till we get back home, and we'll have Navajo rugs and antlers for chandeliers, too, see if we don't."

Nowhere in the world, Mr. Porter assured them, are such trout caught as rise in the ice cold waters of Lake Tahoe, and though the children were like hungry wolves, the breakfast far exceeded their expectations.

As soon as it was over, Scott hurried them down to the pier. He was a dandy courier, the girls said, for he asked questions of everyone, and had all plans made ahead for them. All the morning they spent on the little steamer that plied the surface of the lake and returned with prime appetites for luncheon. Bob and Mr. Porter were going to spend the afternoon fishing, but Scott had decided to hike with the girls over some of the wonderful walks above the hotel.

Helen was sure her ankle was strong enough, but before they had gone far, she sat down regretfully under some tall pines.

"You two go on. It's too bad, but unless I'm careful now, I won't be able to use my foot at all in San Francisco. You go ahead now, Joan,

don't argue a bit. I make a beautiful picture reclining here. Maybe an artist will come along and make his everlasting fortune painting me."

Promising they would not be long, Joan and Scott took up the trail alone. They climbed a quiet path leading up from the water, shaded by quaking aspens with the dark splendor of the pines rising behind them. All at once Joan gave a cry of surprised delight. They had come out on a small sunlit glade right in the heart of the forest, overspread with wildflowers, larkspurs, black eyed Susans, spiræa, and, more beautiful than any, the graceful Columbines, white, purple, pink and yellow. Joan gathered them to her heart's content, then they climbed on higher up until they came suddenly upon a view of the lake once more, looking like some great sapphire set in a circle of deepest jade. Joan sat down with a sigh of contentment, her hands folded over her flowers as she looked dreamily off at the water.

"Oh, Scott, isn't this heavenly? I wish Jack could see it."

Scott lifted his nose up like a happy spaniel, breathing in the air off the lake, as he sat beside her, his hands clasped around his knees.

"I've heard of the lure of the wilds, and I guess we're getting a whiff of it. They say that lake is over two thousand feet deep in places and in

others it has never been sounded. Honestly, Joan, did you ever think that water could be so clear? I believe we can see at least twenty feet below the surface, don't you?"

For a long while they sat there, gazing into the blue transparent depths trying to trace forms in the clouds that loitered like drifting ships on the breast of the mountains across the lake, listening to the notes of wood birds in the forest behind them. All at once Scott glanced at his watch and sprang to his feet.

"I hope Helen's artist came along to paint her picture. We promised to be back by half an hour and it's almost five now."

They ran down the path laughing rather guiltily but Helen had given up all hope of their coming back, and they found her sitting in a big chair on the hotel veranda.

"You want to get that watch of yours fixed, Scott," she said, teasingly. "Never mind. Don't apologize. I've had a dandy time. A party of boys and girls came by and took pity on me. There's a whole club of boys on here, Scott, making a walking tour to San Francisco, a really dandy crowd, and there's a glee club from some girl's college. One of them had a ukulele—"

"Again?" said Scott, blandly. "I didn't understand that one, sister mine."

"Ukulele she called it. You know those Hawaiian things that look like baby guitars. And she played on it for us, the most delicious music. Oh, Joan, it just makes you want to leave all the everyday world behind and be a queen of the islands, and go a-floating in one of their canoes, with flowers and slaves and everything."

"No wonder you never missed us," Joan laughed. "I never heard one played either, did you, Scott?"

"I did and I have," said Scott blithely. "Some of the boys brought them home from college with them at Christmas time. They're very persuasive, Helen. I don't think such a romantic young person as my one and only sister should be allowed to fall under the charm of the ukulele."

There came a glad hail from the path below the veranda, and Bob flew along it as fast as his feet could carry him, holding up a string of trout for them to admire.

"I caught them all by myself, too," he shouted. "They're beauties. There's rainbow, and the cut throat with the red gash on its gullet, and speckled trout. Cousin John caught one that weighs about 'leven pounds."

"Five, son," corrected Mr. Porter, just behind

him. "You're learning fisherman's tricks too soon. Wait till you fish for tuna at Catalina and they carry you away with them."

Bob accompanied the fish personally to the door of the hotel kitchen, trying to impress on the chef that he should give him some of his very own fish for dinner, and then joined the others on the veranda. Here he made friends with the chipmunks and one of them actually ran up his knee and poked its head inquisitively into his trouser pocket.

"I just wish Margie could have seen that," he said thoughtfully. "She won't ever believe it was a really truly chipmunk."

That evening the glee club and the boys of the walking club joined forces to give an entertainment. First came an hour of rollicking college songs all the way from "Nellie Was a Lady," to "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." Then the boys went through military evolutions and acrobatic stunts that left Bob green with envy.

When it was all over, and the last cheering had died away as the audience rose to sing "America," Mr. Porter proposed a stroll down the long pier that extended far out into the lake. Behind them was the tavern with its brilliant lights and sounds of gayety, and ahead of them the silence of the unfathomable night, the full moon rising over

Mount Tom, and in its radiance, the water reflecting a thousand glowing colors.

"Oh, listen," Helen exclaimed softly, laying her hand on Joan's arm. "Now do you hear it?"

Out in the shadowy darkness darted a boat, and from it came the rippling, tinkling music and voices singing in a minor cadence,

"Enchanting is the scene when the silvery moon
is beaming,

On murmuring waters at my dear Kaikiki.
Fair Hawaii—Fair Hawaii."

Into the wake of the moonlight they came, and the girls waved to the singers, recognizing some of the boys and girls they had met that afternoon. Then came another song, fraught with melody,

"I love you, California,
You're the greatest state of all.
I love you in the winter, summer, spring and fall.
I love your fertile valleys, your dear mountains
I adore.

I love your grand old ocean, and I love your
rugged shore."

Fainter and fainter came the voices, dying away as the singers passed from sight.

"California—California!"

With a long sigh of delight Joan turned to Scott, saying,

"What a welcome! It seems as if it were meant just for us." And she hummed the last bar dreamily,

"I love you, California."

The next morning they were back on the train again, passing through very different scenery from Utah's mountains and desert. Here was the Truckee River, a rollicking stream, joyful in waterfalls and rapids tumbling in green foam, then for long stretches dashing over great rocky bowlders and dividing to form tiny islands. Along the shores were tall lumber stacks, with here and there a glimpse of an occasional sawmill or paper factory. Far in the distance rose the purple foothills, covered with small scrub pines, and Bob cried out,

"Oh, look at the forest of Christmas trees, Joan!"

Passing Donner Lake the conductor told Scott the story of the ill fated party that had perished there in 1846. Joan declared she couldn't feel that it was all real at all, this racing up to dizzy heights, up and up to the very summits of the Sierras, then plunging into the snowsheds and down again into the bright sunlight. Above

them, around them everywhere at this stage of the journey, rose the majestic peaks, snow crowned and mysterious. Here in these cloud-lands tiny threadlike streams grew to plunging torrents! It was icy cold and Helen hugged her sweater around her closer.

"Well," she cried, "if this isn't just like winter."

Early in the afternoon the train wound its way down from the heights into the Sacramento Valley, the scenery gradually becoming less rugged until the rolling hills gave way to fields under cultivation where the grain was already harvested. Then at last came their first glimpse of orange groves, glossy green leaves and golden fruit. Terraced hills rose now with olive groves, soft silvery gray in tone, and fertile plains as far as the eye could reach. It was very warm again, and the girls slipped off their sweaters, while Scott hummed under his breath,

"California—California!"

It was Mr. Porter who first called Bob's attention to the sign, "Pacific Fruit Exchange."

"That's where a lot of your oranges and fruit comes from. Those long lines of freight trains are waiting to carry it east."

The train stopped at Sacramento long enough

for them to take a little breath of air along the platform, and then they took the road once more, passed the terraced hills all along the Sacramento river until towards sundown there came a keen salt tang to the air, reminding them they were not far from the ocean. At last the long train was ferried over the Sacramento, something that Bob had been looking forward to all the way, but so easily was it done that he did not notice the change in motion until they were almost over, when he cried out,

“Oh, dear, we’re ’most on the other side, and I didn’t even know we’d started, Joan.”

Joan laughed. She felt alert and alive in every nerve as they neared their journey’s end. People were hurrying off the cars and on the big ferry boat that awaited them. Mr. Porter and Scott secured good seats on the upper forward deck where they could all get the finest view of the city’s approach up the bay. It is like nothing in all the world, perhaps, this entrance to San Francisco, the wide expanse of water, ferry boats crisscrossing in every direction like flying shuttles weaving some mystical pattern of fate, great ocean steamers from the Orient plowing their way in, others tugging at anchor chains, the rounded hills on which the city is built, and far off in the distance the gleaming waters of the

Golden Gate. Joan looked at it with tears rising to her eyes.

"I did not know it could be so beautiful," she said.

CHAPTER IX

PILGRIMS OF HAPPINESS

"DEAR little twin," Jack's letter from home began, "I've missed you terribly, and no mistake, but I know you must be having a wonderful trip, so try to be content. Only write often and make the letters as long as you can."

The "Junior Traveling Club," as Joan had dubbed them, were occupying the sitting room of the hotel suite Mr. Porter had engaged for the stay in San Francisco. Joan was in the big arm chair by the window, Helen curled up in a corner of the couch, Scott and Mr. Porter poring over eastern newspapers, and Bob, reclining restfully upside down in another armchair, was trying to decipher some hieroglyphics he had received from Margie.

"Well," Helen declared. "I don't believe Theo misses us one bit. Tennis every day and two dances in view. 'Out of sight, out of mind.'"

"Just listen to this," Joan read on. "Jack says Happy Day is home and Pappy has consented at

last. She is going to the specialist in New York just as soon as Cousin John gets back. Dear little girl, I'm so glad for her. Wouldn't it be splendid if her sight could be saved after all? It wouldn't be the first time that oculists have been mistaken. Whatever's struck you, Bob?"

Bob's heels waved ecstatically in the air. He had been chuckling to himself for some time, and finally exploded,

"Oh, you just ought to read what Margie's written. It beats anything, Joan. You read it, 'cause I have to laugh too much."

He passed the funny irregular little scrawl over to Joan, and she read it aloud,

"Dear Bob, It's been awful lonesome ever sence you went away. The little white pigs got out the other day and went to the gate looking for you." Here she had drawn eight comical objects, evidently intended for pigs, although Bob declared he never would have recognized them if it hadn't been for the curly tails.

"Then," Joan read on, "Val'tine got lost, that is, we thought she was lost, but she was in a bruro drawer all the time, and when I opened the drawer she jumped, like this—" Here she had drawn other objects labeled "This is Tony looking for Val'tine." Then another, "This is me

calling 'kitty,' " and finally, "This is the way she jumped out of the drawer.

"Good-by, lovingly your sister and friend,
"MARGIE."

"I do think Margie must be the artist of the family," Joan declared, laughingly, as she held the page out for inspection.

"Well, she may need an art education, but I don't think a little spelling as she goes along would hurt her," Helen said. "Aren't those pigs funny, though?"

There were letters, too, from California, expressing Mr. and Mrs. Monroe's pleasure at seeing them all so soon. Inclosed in Helen's letter from her mother was one for Joan, and the latter's eyes filled with quick tears as she read it. She was beginning to feel her first pangs of homesickness, getting farther and farther away from her own mother and Jack, and the warm sincerity of the letter touched her to the heart. She gave it to Helen to read.

"I think your mother is a dear to send me that," she said softly. "I love her already."

In Scott's letter from his father, the closing sentences made him feel rather sober. They made him realize that the future held many responsibilities for him.

"I am glad, laddie, that you will soon be here. I find I need my son in many ways. It is doubtful, Scott, whether I shall ever be entirely well again, and the time may come when you will have to look after Helen and your mother. I mustn't cast a shadow over your homecoming, though, for after all, I am in better health than many men of my age, and the California climate has certainly been of great benefit to me. We shall have much to be thankful for in being all together in this beautiful place."

The next morning they settled down to answer the home letters, Bob especially spending much time and care over his. He wrote a queer mixture, trying to cover the entire journey from beginning to end for Margie's delectation and the result was the funniest compound of mountains and prairie dogs, chipmunks and fishing. But as he said contentedly when it was over Margie was not one to criticize. It was almost twelve o'clock when Mr. Porter came in.

"I'm sorry, but we'll have to cut the letter writing short if we're going out this afternoon," he told them. "There's too much to see and no time to lose."

"Let's ride on the ferry boat over and over again," suggested Bob, who had been delighted with the experience the night before, and felt he

would be contented just to ride back and forth almost indefinitely.

"We want to see the art shops and Golden Gate Park," Joan reminded him.

"I'm for Berkeley and a climb up Tampalpais," Scott exclaimed, but Mr. Porter shook his head, laughing at the clamor.

"We can't very well cover it all, youngsters. You'll have to pick and choose. Suppose we choose Chinatown for this afternoon, and take to-morrow for the Cliff House and the Park. The trips over the Bay can come later, Bob boy."

"Chinatown," cried Helen, springing up from her letters at the name. "That was what I wanted most to see. It will be almost as nice as seeing it by night."

They all hurried to get ready, only Bob, who waited to add a very characteristic postscript to his letter.

"P. S.—I'll have to close now 'cause we're going to see the Chinese this afternoon and to-morrow we're going to the Cliff House where the seals are, only they're not sealskins (I mean like mother had a coat of). And what do you suppose, Margie, in this hotel the beds are in the wall, not on the floor like they are at home."

"There," he said happily, "guess that will sur-

prise her. She never thought of having beds in the walls."

"P. P. S. again. Give Prince an extra lump of sugar and tell him I'm coming back some time. Kind regards to the pigs."

Chinatown was certainly amusing. Mr. Porter engaged a guide, a very dignified and consequential person who spoke careful English and looked over their heads in a faraway manner that Joan said was exactly like Pooh-bah in "The Mikado."

"'Run away, little girls, run away. Can't talk to little girls like you,'" she quoted mirthfully to Helen behind the stately back of the guide as they followed him through the narrow streets, listening to his descriptions of the oriental looking houses on each side.

"If I were only trundling along in a nice little rickshaw with a parasol over my head, I'd feel as if this were the really truly orient," said Helen. "Oh, Joan, I just saw the prettiest white silk hand embroidered fan in a window. I want it for Mother."

But, as Bob said, it was a case of "Follow your leader," and they trotted after the guide up three narrow flights of stairs into a Chinese temple or Joss house where the fumes of incense were almost overpowering. Scott drew Joan's attention to

a red disc above the altar, typifying the sun, and told her how in China all the temples face the rising sun. The altar was loaded with gold leaf, gorgeous peacock feathers adding to the effect.

The guide motioned them to stand near the railing, while he recited in a haughty, monotonous tone,

"The word Joss is a corruption of the Portuguese word for God. The Chinese are very religious. When they enter their house of worship they kowtow in reverence before their deity and burn incense in his honor."

Here he bowed likewise, and handed each one a small green object, shaped like a cartridge, but which he explained, was incense.

Leaving the temple behind, they passed through streets lined with grocery stores where all kinds of strange vegetables were for sale. Bob discovered a brand new diversion, though, watching an old Chinaman who sat out on the sidewalk making change.

"Watch him," cried Scott. "I do believe he is putting the pieces of money in his ear. I'd never have thought of using my ear for a nice handy little pocketbook."

Bob was silent, trying to see how the Chinaman accomplished it, so he could amaze Margie with the stunt, but other things drew him away. One

dark little shop boasted an array of dried snakes and lizards. From the side of its door hung bunches of dusty herbs, and inside were little bins filled with all kinds of dried foods.

"Look, Bob," Joan whispered, "that stout old herb doctor has fingernails at least five inches long."

"Don't you know that is a sign of great learning," the guide said gravely. "The longer his nails are, the better doctor he is. This," he waved his hand at the establishment they came to next. "This is the largest Chinese store in America. Sing Fat is not the name of the proprietor, but is a saying signifying great prosperity. Here I will leave you for awhile, as he will be glad to have you look over his collection of Oriental goods even if you do not buy any. I will whistle outside when it is time to go on."

Helen, who was always the first to loosen her purse strings, was the first one inside the doorway, excitedly motioning Joan to follow.

"Just think, four floors of these lovely things," she exclaimed. "Let's buy a lot of our presents here, Joan. I wonder what your mother would like best, an embroidered centerpiece, or a piece of Satsuma."

But Joan was in another aisle, bending over a quaint statuette with Bob and Scott.

"I'm going to buy it for Jack," she said, delightedly. "It's the three wise monkeys, Bob. They are on a temple in Japan and this one holds his hands over his eyes, see? That means, 'See no evil.' Then this one has his clasped over his ears. That means 'Hear no evil.' And the last one holds his lips fast shut, meaning 'Speak no evil.'"

"There ought to be another one," said Bob, sniffing. "Did you smell that funny incense stuff he's burning way in the back, like old dried rat tails? I'd have another monkey holding his nose, if I'd made that for Chinatown, and call it 'Smell no evil.'"

"Bob, you're impossible," laughed Joan. "I know Jack will like this, and I've got a little hand carved ivory elephant for Theo."

"Joan Clayton," called Helen imperatively. "You must see this jade. I want a necklace of it. It's the sacred stone, I think."

"It is lovely," Joan agreed, wishing she had enough money to buy the beautiful green necklace for her mother. "But I can't, and it's no use in pining for it," she said happily. "I want to find a real Chinese doll for Margie, with straight bangs and almond eyes."

Bob had sauntered away by himself towards the back of the store, and was fairly gloating

over a variety of things there, miniature islands with quaint pagodas and little bridges, ducks and swans that floated on the water, a tiny owl and geese with bright little eyes made of mother-of-pearl. After a longing look at a row of bronze elephants pacing over a curved bridge, he went down another side aisle and out of the store to see what was happening on the sidewalk.

Meantime Mr. Porter had been busily selecting a beautiful screen and rare teakwood stand.

"Those are to go back to your mother and Theo," he told Joan. "Do you think they will be all right?"

"I think they're wonderful, Cousin John," Joan exclaimed. "It's just like traveling around with a magician who can make all sorts of things come true."

Just then the shrill whistle outside warned them it was time to leave, and reluctantly they obeyed its call.

"Oh, dear," sighed Helen. "I could stay in there a week. I never saw so many interesting things all together, and just begging you to buy them."

As they started up the street, Bob was found to be missing. He had disappeared as completely as if the ground had opened and swallowed him up, and though the guide questioned

two or three bystanders, the reply was always a shake of the head and a mild denial,

"No sabe. We no see li'l boy, li'l boy lost."

"I do think he might have waited a second," Joan exclaimed. "I saw him looking at those little islands and water gardens last."

Scott shook his head.

"It was longer than a second, I'm afraid. It took just exactly twenty minutes to buy the jade necklace, to say nothing of the other things."

In and out of each shop along the little narrow crooked street, they hunted the missing traveler. Just as Joan thought it was time to notify the police, one curious old Chinaman who leaned against the side of his shop smoking a long pipe, pointed with it to a restaurant upstairs over a curio shop.

"Li'l boy walkee up there," he said, pleasantly.

And sure enough, there they found the recreant Bob, monarch of all he surveyed, making a tour of inspection of the place and eyeing with fascinated interest its customers eating rice and chop suey with chopsticks.

"Robert!" Joan spoke for the first time in a voice that made Bob start perceptibly. "What do you suppose mother would say? You know better than to get lost in this way and worry us all."

"I wasn't lost, Joan, honest and true," replied the young man aggrievedly. "You might have known I'd be in here. I stopped in a barber shop too and you should have seen them shaving an old fellow's head, all excepting the place for his queue." He stopped, staring again in admiring wonderment at the dexterity with which the chopsticks were handled. "I wish I could eat that way. I'll get some chopsticks myself." He smiled, but Joan's face was full of a smothered indignation that roused even Bob's respect. "She hasn't Roberted me before since we left home," he thought, meditatively. And all the rest of the way, much to his mortification, he had to hold big sister's hand. Joan was long suffering and tender hearted, but there was a limit, she declared. And Bob displayed a curious meekness and resignation.

"Now," said the guide, with a flourish, "we are about to visit a Chinese home."

He led them through a little narrow street paved with rough cobble stones, and down half a dozen steps into a dark underground room. At the door he turned to explain with the same detached air of pompous dignity that had delighted the children from the beginning,

"This family, like many others, has been converted to Christianity. I will ask the children to

sing some of their native airs and then some of this country's well known songs."

There were four sturdy little fellows standing in a row just like Chinese dolls, Helen declared, with their oddly shaven heads and oblique eyes. The baby girl was only six months old, but the others were all prepared to entertain visitors, and sang enthusiastically the Chinese rendition of "Bright Jewels," which they had learned from the missionaries. But the funniest of all was when they tried to sing "America" with a Chinese accent, and even the baby started in to cry. But Scott led in the applause and they gave several encores willingly enough. Then the five year old boy came timidly forward, holding out some picture postals of the family.

"Well, they did well that time," Helen said with a happy sigh, as they came up out of the little dark doorway, each with some of the postals to send off. "My goodness, they're still singing at us, Joan."

Joan laughed and waved back to the little group standing in the doorway, waving to them. They looked just like little dolls, she declared.

"Before leaving Chinatown, I shall take you to hear one of the oldest and best Chinese musicians in America," said the guide in his grave, punctilious manner. He turned into another

side street and led them into another basement, through an underground passageway and into a dimly lighted room where an old Chinaman stood before a long table. Bob whispered to Scott that he had a real queue, but Joan had her eye on him, so he subsided as the music began. Helen declared afterwards that it made her think of the old riddle, "What makes more noise than one pig going under a gate?"

"Well, each to his kind," Mr. Porter told her, as he examined the quaintly made instruments, and paid the old man for his share of their entertainment. "It's time we were going back to the hotel now."

"I know what we are," Joan said suddenly as they were leaving, "pilgrims of happiness."

"Guess you're right," Scott answered with mock dolefulness. "I know I'm getting foot-sore and weary and pretty near hollow."

At parting the guide presented each of them with a piece of Chinese money, valued at about one hundredth part of a cent, and a small piece of cardboard marked with red and black spots, which he said was one of their playing cards.

"These be souvenirs," quoth Joan, tucking hers carefully away in her handbag, while Bob crammed his into a pocket that already bulged with treasures.

"Bob, where are you going to practice with those chopsticks?" asked Scott teasingly. But Bob trudged on with a serene and lofty air of abstraction. He was really too exalted with the spirit of adventure to descend to any explanations.

The following day they started bright and early for the Cliff House. On the way Mr. Porter pointed out the Presidio to them, the largest military reservation that exists anywhere within the limits of a city. Then on to Sutro Heights with its beautiful Italian garden. The girls fairly reveled in this spot. Along its shaded walks grew rare shrubs and strange trees, with hedges of geraniums nearly five feet high.

"Joan," said Helen solemnly. "Pinch me. Do you see giant fuchsias over there? And are there really hydrangea trees?"

"I begin to feel like Alice in Wonderland," laughed Joan. "Oh, do look at this darling grotto and the little gnomes."

Far below them they could hear the roar of the Pacific and catch glimpses of breakers through the dense shrubbery. Going on to the Cliff House, they passed the Sutro Baths, where hundreds were bathing, but Bob was in a rush to get down to the ocean itself and see the seals.

"But, Joan, they look like big brown moles,"

he exclaimed dubiously when he finally did come in sight of them. "Wish I could get out there with a long pole and stir them up."

"Do you know what would happen if you did?" Mr. Porter said, his eyes twinkling as he watched Bob's serious face. "They would be offended and swim away. Sometimes when they are thoroughly miffed they will stay away for months."

"Well, of course, I wouldn't want them to feel as badly as all that," Bob replied, much impressed, and he contented himself with watching the seals through the opera glasses his cousin rented for him.

It was so cool that even Scott was satisfied to watch the big breakers roll in on the beach until it was time for luncheon, and they started for Golden Gate Park. This was what Joan liked best. First there was the lake with its wealth of water lilies, and the museum, where Helen declared her eyes were dazzled, she had looked on so much that was curious and rare. But Joan found a real little Japanese tea garden with arched bridges, stone storks and lanterns, and stately pergolas.

"This is just darling," exclaimed Joan fervently, sinking into a willow chair, and gazing around her. "Isn't this little waitress just like a picture on a fan, Helen?"

Tea was served to them in tiny cups with "covers" as Bob whispered, but in such a loud undertone that the little Jap maid turned and smiled at him, whereupon Bob blushed furiously and stared at the big butterfly bow on her back.

Inside each napkin was folded a little American flag, and rice cakes for each person. These were shaped like cocked hats and Joan found a motto in hers, a Japanese proverb which the little "Yum-Yum" girl, as Scott called her, told them meant, "Good luck is on your threshold."

"Another souvenir for my treasure box," she cried gayly. "Won't it be fun to look them all over with Theo and Margie when I get back home!"

After tea, they rambled around the quaint gardens, making new discoveries at every step. Helen declared she thought there should be a miniature Japanese garden in everybody's back yard. Mr. Porter told them how even among the poorest, there is the love for flowers and beauty in arrangement.

"Why, it's just exactly like being a tiny doll one's own self," Joan declared, "in one of those little Jap gardens for table decoration. Look at the little arched bridge, Scott, and dwarfed trees everywhere. And do see those bird houses made of bamboo, Bobbie, and the queer stone turtles.

Don't you want one to hide away in your pocket? It only weighs about three hundred probably."

"I like the smiling Buddhas," Scott said. "Somebody told me there was a real Jap house around some place."

It was Bob who discovered it, almost hidden behind the thick wistaria vine. The children explored it delightedly, fairly gloating over its sliding walls and screens, and the kakemonos on the walls. In one room two Japanese figures of men bent over their gambling outfits, and in another room were two geishas drinking tea.

"Isn't it queer," said Helen, "how they sit on the floor and never use any chairs. And they sleep with a block of wood under their heads so as not to disarrange their hair. I rather like that plan myself, because I do hate to comb out a lot of snarls every day."

It was with real regret that they said good-by to this enchanting nook from Nippon land, and as they passed out of the gateway, they all waved farewell to the little Japanese maidens.

The days were filled with new surprises after that. Long motor trips through Oakland and Berkeley, rides by trolley all around the suburbs of this wonderful city. Joan declared it seemed as if they could go on forever on a single fare, so generous was the system of transfers. Then,

too, there were the markets and the fishermen's wharves with their great catches of cod, lobster and bass. Scott liked the big docks, crowded with steamships from all parts of the world, and the girls teased to return to the shops with their beautiful displays of oriental art and craftsmanship.

But Bob rather favored the cafeterias. Here they could take their own trays and pick out just what they chose, "the only trouble is," Joan said, "it's so hard to make the right selection from so many good things." One day Bob stood meditating over a choice between strawberry pie and blackberry pie, until Scott came along and suggested he take both. Bob came back to their table with a seraphic smile of content and said blandly as he set down his loaded tray,

"That's what Jack calls cutting the Guardian knot."

"Gordian, dear," Joan corrected. "Don't you remember how Alexander cut it?"

"Gordian," repeated Bob valiantly. "Anyhow, I am convinced that Scott is a very, very val'ble and desir'ble member of our comp'ny. This is going to be a very satisfact'ry meal."

When it was all over, they declared though, that the best of all was the day they spent among the great trees at Santa Cruz. It only took about

three hours to run out by auto through the beautiful mountain ranges, and they stopped right among the big redwoods. Joan named them the "Methuselahs of the forest," and Scott thought her eyes just a shade browner and more full of sparkles than ever as she stood in one of the big chimney pines looking up at the sky.

It was so wonderfully quiet that even Bob was silent.

"I think it's like some vast old cathedral," said Joan, softly, "with the trees for pillars and the birds singing anthems all the time."

They ate their lunch of sandwiches and ice cream cones, sitting on a fallen giant, and Bob got fearfully mixed up trying to count the great rings that dated back to the time of the flood.

Then, when twilight came, they motored back to the city, a little bit tired and quiet from what Mr. Porter called the immensity of it all. But Scott and Joan both declared it was a day to be marked by a white milestone, and all the others could be called red letter days, ten of them, since they had left home.

CHAPTER X

EL CAMINO REAL

"DOESN'T it seem odd to see the rain way out here!" Joan exclaimed when they started the following morning for Santa Barbara. "Somehow you get into the notion that it always must be sunshiny in California."

"It isn't so much rain as a genuine 'Frisco fog," laughed Mr. Porter. "We've been specially favored by the weather man during our five days here, though no one ever minds this if he's living out here. You'd have missed a good deal if you had gone away without getting right into the middle of one."

"Well, it is certainly the wettest fog I ever saw," said Helen. "I'm positive some real drops fell on your new hat, Joan."

They were far along in the Santa Clara Valley when it lifted, and a wonderful panorama unfolded before them, miles of orchards, fairly bending low under their weight of apricots and prunes.

"Oh, Helen, it makes me think of the old fairy

tale about Mother Hulda when the trees cried out, 'Pick me, pick me,' " said Joan delightedly. Suddenly there came the porter's voice shouting through the car,

"This is known as the Valley of Heart's Delight. Once a year when all the rest of the country is ice bound, the people here celebrate the feast of the blossoms."

"I saw it in February one year when I came through," Mr. Porter told them. "It is truly a glorious sight. I hardly believe even the cherry blossoms in Japan could equal these. The whole valley seems to bloom in beauty."

On and on they sped, the train passing through fields golden with poppies and past groves of towering eucalyptus, great strange trees that constantly shed their bark.

"Somehow," Joan said, musingly, "they make me think of the old dryad tales. Maybe there are spirits imprisoned in those great trunks, and when the bark peels, perhaps they are trying to break the spell that binds them. I didn't like the eucalyptus at first, but now I love them. They make such glorious wind breaks."

"I'd like to just lay off and tramp all through here," said Scott. "Wish Jack and I could do it next year together. We could camp out and get to places you don't see on the train."

"Oh, look," called out Bob, craning his neck as the huge oil tank and derricks came in view. "Wonder what those are for?"

"To calm the troubled waters," Scott told him soberly.

"Well," Helen remarked in her point blank way, "I never thought I'd see acres and acres of sweet peas, red and pink and lavender."

"El Camino Real," called the porter, and the children all watched eagerly for a glimpse of the old mission. Sure enough, there lay the mission road, winding like a white thread down from the mountains between the yellow fields. Joan's heart gave a throb of what Bob would have called "sentimental 'motion," at sight of it. Poor old Jack, way off in Hillview, if he had only been along to enjoy it too.

"I know one thing," Scott exclaimed. "It was a great thing for those old padres to make that road and found missions in the wilderness. It must have taken no end of courage as well as downright hard work to teach a lot of savages to be decent."

"I don't think they were like real savages," Joan said eagerly. "They were like the Navajos and the Pueblos, weren't they, Cousin John? Oh, do look, Helen! I feel as if I might see Ramona out there any minute."

She pointed to the tall white adobe walls with mission towers rising high, and the arms of the cross gleaming in the vivid sunlight. Then at noon came the call of the bells faintly. From three o'clock the train ran along the ocean front, and they had the delight of watching the water, until in the cool twilight, at last they drew up at the attractive station in Santa Barbara.

Joan thought of a stray bit of verse she had always loved,

“And then the bells! One stands with low bowed
head

While listening to their silvery tongues recite
The sweet tale of the Angelus.”

Santa Barbara seemed to the girls that first day, like some dream city nestling between the amethyst sea and her guardian mountains. Airy, feathery pepper trees and picturesque palms lined the streets of flower embowered houses. Above, the old white mission stood, its twin domed belfries seeming to utter a perpetual benediction over the city.

The children wandered about the hotel grounds admiring the almost tropical jungle of banana, rubber and cocoanut trees. The air was heavy with the fragrance of roses and orange blossoms,

and in the distance could be heard the surf rolling and tumbling along the beach.

"My dear, this is southern California," said Mr. Porter, slipping Joan's hand through his arm, "are you disappointed?"

"It's just fairyland," sighed Joan happily, her chin uplifted as she breathed in deep whiffs of the sweet scented air. "I have to keep pinching myself to be sure I'm awake these days."

"No wonder father and mother wouldn't come back to our bleak, sober east after this," said Scott. "I'm going to live and die in this 'glorious climate of Californy.'"

The next morning they all went up to the mission. It was just exactly like the setting of a story, the branches of the pepper trees swaying softly, the square with its playing fountain, the old cross in front, and the mission bell with the inscription which Joan read reverently,

"El Camino Real,
Mission Santa Barbara,
Founded December 4, 1786."

Mounting the steps to the red tiled corridor they came upon a bell marked "pull," something which Bob proceeded to do with such force that it set the echoes ringing through the empty rooms

within and quickly brought to the door a monk in the brown habit of the Franciscan order.

He told them such interesting things in guiding them through the building. It was the most important of all the old missions with thousands of Indians under its protection. Taking a color chart in his hands, he explained how the old fathers had taken great pains to make the Indians sing by note, and finally had hit upon the idea of giving each note a different color.

In one of the rooms, the walls dated back over a hundred years, and had even now many of the original grills and timbers. There was a rawhide bedstead that pleased Bob, and chandeliers made by the Indians, besides matates for grinding corn and ollas or water jars.

Bob had been prowling around by himself, and suddenly made a discovery.

"What are these marks in the pavement for?"

"The footprints of a mountain lion," answered the padre. "There used to be so many in the mountains, they would steal down even to the doors of the mission."

He led the way into the church reverently, pointing out the statue of the patron saint, some fine pictures, besides many relics and the peaceful cemetery, "God's Acre," as he quaintly called it. Out here it was so quiet and restful among flow-

ers and shrubs that had been planted by the old monks themselves. Stooping, their guide plucked a few roses, and a spray from the great heliotrope that grew close to the wall, and handed them to Joan and Helen.

"That is for remembrance," he told them gently, with a smile of beautiful hospitality and courtesy. Ever afterwards, Helen declared dramatically when they returned to the hotel, the scent of heliotrope would bring back the old mission garden, the shady cemetery beyond, and the Franciscan brother, as if it really carried a benediction with it.

"What more is there to be seen?" asked Mr. Porter genially. "Surely we have nearly covered it all."

"Only the belfry, and then the garden where no women are permitted."

"Oh, dear," Helen said, "I'm sure that's the best place of all. Isn't it just like men to keep that all for themselves?"

"Never mind," Joan smiled back. "We can climb the belfry and maybe up there we can peek over into the old garden."

"Climb those stairs!" exclaimed Mr. Porter, with a comic sigh. "No, indeed, young woman."

"I'm quite sure my ankle isn't strong enough for such a pull," retorted Helen, still piqued at

not being allowed in the forbidden spot. "I intend to make my way down to the ocean—you and Scott can do all the climbing you want to, but there's nothing to see at the top except the view, I suppose, and I can imagine that without much difficulty."

"Each to his mind," was Joan's gay response as she and Scott started up the stairs.

Bob was already at the top and soon passed them on his way down.

"There's forty-five, that is, at first, and then you go up a dozen more and then to another lot of bells. Keep a-going and you'll get there."

When they reached the end of the long climb, both Joan and Scott felt repaid, and stood some time in the old belfry looking over the sunny valley. On one side were the wooded slopes of Montecito and in the nearer distance were fields of yellow mustard and the great expanse of ocean.

There was something very solemn to both of them in being there among the old bells, "that call to vespers and to mass," Joan softly quoted. "Can't you almost fancy you see the Indians coming along the road to mass?"

Scott nodded.

"It was pretty tough to have to give up all that work." Then he added, half teasingly. "Do

you know, Joan, I think you are awfully like the patron saint of this old mission."

"What an idea," laughed Joan. "What ever put that into your head?"

"Well, you know, I'm not much given to reading those old legends, but there was something in Dick's book about Santa Barbara that did sort of remind me of you. She was so loyal and true and was put to death rather than give up her religion. They say this mission is dedicated to her because it is by the ocean and sailors pray to her for courage before they set out on a stormy sea. Then mother has a picture of Santa Barbara, and it's true, Joan, the forehead and mouth do remind me of you. I tell you it's worth a lot to a fellow to know a girl like you."

"Thanks for your good opinion, kind sir," Joan said, flushing. "It is mighty nice, I'm sure, and I'll try extra hard after this to realize our Santa Barbara's ideal. We'll deserve a scolding if we stay here any longer," and she ran down the steps.

They reached the gate of the mission in time to catch a street car. The others were still at the beach discussing plans for the afternoon, Mr. Porter having decided to make the remainder of their trip by automobile.

"Won't it be fun?" called Helen as soon as the two came within hearing distance. "We sent a

telegram telling father we'll come directly to the cottage."

"It will be a pleasant ride through this part of the country, I am sure," said Mr. Porter. "You will enjoy it more than by train. You'll have to hurry. We start in less than an hour."

It was a speedy trip. As they approached the city, Mr. Porter pointed out a low white house marked by a cross as "El Camulos Ranch," better known, he explained, as the home of Ramona and all wished it were possible to stop and see the "sunny gallery with its whitewashed walls and the courtyard and the fountain," the description of which they had read and loved.

With the tang of salt air, Helen's spirits rose.

"'Over the world and under the world and back at the last to you,' " sang Joan, her cheeks pink from the ride. "Helen, don't you wish you had a flag or a megaphone to call them?"

Helen hugged her vigorously.

"You can laugh, but just wait till you meet mother. Then you'll know why I feel just like whooping. It isn't any fun being three thousand miles away from your mother. Oh, Joan, I didn't mean that," she added with quick regret. But Joan smiled back pluckily.

"It won't be long," she answered.

CHAPTER XI

THE BEACHES

It was a quiet beach which the Monroes had chosen as an ideal place to spend a few months. Their cottage was a "real Californian," the early mission style, unplastered. Outside it was shingled and inside walls of native redwood formed an attractive background for the few choice pictures which Mrs. Monroe had placed there. There was a long living room with a hot blast stove, and three bedrooms with the usual wall beds.

For an hour or so, Mr. Monroe and his wife had been waiting on the veranda, watching anxiously the passing automobiles. At last Mrs. Monroe laid aside the collar she was embroidering for Helen and started down the steps.

"It seems to me it is very late, dear. I hope there has not been an accident."

"Don't even think of it," he told her, when suddenly a car shot into sight. "They are here now."

"Yes," cried Mrs. Monroe. "Scott's in front and that's Helen waving her handkerchief!"

Scarcely had she finished when the car stopped in front of the house and Scott sprang out.

"Mother, mother," Helen cried. "I thought we would never get here. We've had a wonderful trip and there's lots to tell, but, oh, I'm so glad to see you and father."

They were like two sisters, Helen and her mother, laughing and crying in each other's embrace, and had it not been for the tiny lines of care in Mrs. Monroe's face and the occasional silver thread in the light hair, they would have seemed almost the same age.

Another moment, Scott was kissing his mother and she was saying how splendid he was, and how long the months of separation had seemed, while Helen was excitedly trying to tell her father everything at once. Breaking short, she cried,

"Oh, mother, we're forgetting all about Mr. Porter and Bob and—mother, dear, this is Joan."

"Welcome to California," called Mrs. Monroe, gayly, holding out her hand to first one and then another. "And thank you, Mr. Porter, for bringing our two chicks safely home to roost."

Joan fell in love with Mr. Monroe at once, as she had been confident she would, irresistibly attracted to the grave, quiet man with Scott's smile.

Their accommodations had been arranged, a

suite engaged at the hotel near by for Mr. Porter and Bob, while Helen was to share her room with Joan. As the girls ran in to take off their hats and freshen themselves for dinner, Joan gave a cry of pleasure. On the walls were some kodak views of the house at Hillview, the veranda, with her mother and Jack sitting there, besides a picture of Margie in her cart and Theo with her tennis racket. On the dresser lay a pile of letters from her mother, Jack and Lidy. And then she felt really at home.

The cottage was not directly on the water, but had a magnificent view of the ocean from the front windows, and the swish of the waves could be distinctly heard. It was, too, sufficiently near for the young folks to run to the beach in their bathing suits which had been the "convincing argument in its favor," Mrs. Monroe had told her husband.

The life at the beach was all new to them. In the mornings they were glad of their sweaters, as it was always cold and foggy, but even though they shivered, a short, brisk walk before breakfast would bring the rose hue to their cheeks. By eleven o'clock off went the wraps, for the sun was by that time, "hot enough to bake one," as Helen used to say. The evenings were almost chilly, and they were glad to stuff all the

crumpled newspapers they could find into the stove.

Bob was crazy over it all and couldn't see why he need ever wear anything except his bathing suit, and, as a matter of fact, he was in the water, or digging in the sand, practically the whole day long.

There were other cottagers in whom the Monroes had become interested. Miss Saunders, the thin little teacher who had lately been retired on a pension. Now she lived in a modest one room cottage with her pet, Teddy, a Scotch terrier. Every day, when the world was well warmed, she would venture cautiously into the shallow water for her "morning bath." It worried her because Teddy did not share her enthusiasm, and she would often spend many moments trying to coax him in. He disliked cold water, but was always eager to welcome her when she was ready for her sun-bath, and would bark furiously at any chance intruder, when, wrapped in her steamer rug, she dozed under a big umbrella.

There was, too, Ben Phillips, the crippled boy in the wheeled chair, who reminded them of little Paul Dombey. He had been sent by the fresh air fund for a month at the sea shore, and would sit all day long, listening to the "sad sea waves."

When Bob discovered the Dane children, he

was greatly excited and came running to the house, calling,

"What do you think? They used to live in Mexico and have the queerest names; there's Mar'qu'ta and Fel-Fel"—here he floundered hopelessly. "Well, anyway, she said the boys at school call her 'Fleas.' Besides there's Morris, he's littler than me, but he's got a 'Merican name—we're going to have lots of fun together."

He stopped out of breath, for he had made what was, for him, a very long speech and Mrs. Monroe explained,

"Mrs. Dane has a home in Hollywood. Recently she came up to California to educate the children, who were all born in Mexico. The oldest is Mariquita, which is Spanish for 'little Marie.' She is thirteen and the best swimmer on the beach for her age; the next is Felicita, whom I have dubbed Princess Curly-Locks, with curly brown hair—she is nine, while Morris, scarcely five, is a dear little chap with a winsome smile. Bob will have a good time with them and no mistake."

It would be hard to do justice to the days that followed. Joan and Helen learned to swim and would take the big waves without any trouble. After a week or so, Joan wrote Jack she had gained six and a half pounds, and was so tanned

he would scarcely recognize her, while Helen's arms looked like one big freckle. Bob was timid at first until his cousin took him out and held him while the waves broke over him. But he liked best to wade into the water with the children, and then run scurrying back as the waves rolled threateningly in.

It was fun, too, to play in the sand, tumbling about, digging for crabs or gathering sea weed which had been cast up by the tide. At times he would call Joan or Helen to come and bury him in the sand, but he never could keep still enough, and a pink toe would be sure to wriggle out and "spoil it all," Felicity would mournfully say.

As time went on, Mr. and Mrs. Monroe enjoyed the young folks more and more. The letter which Scott had received from his father while in San Francisco had established a close bond between the two and led to many confidential talks. There was no further reference made to his health, but the older man felt, no matter what happened, he would not be disappointed in his son who stood ready, as far as he could, to shoulder responsibilities.

Helen and her mother had always been most congenial, and Joan fitted into her place in the household in a way that delighted them all. In

fact, "She seems exactly like one of us," was the comment Mrs. Monroe made more than once to her husband.

"Yes," was his reply, "she is all and more than they wrote, interesting, thoughtful, loyal to her friends, quick in her sympathies, and ready to enter into every pleasure. It is a genuine treat to know such a girl."

It had been his custom from the first to take his constitutional before dinner on the walk that ran along the ocean front, and it became the usual thing for Joan to accompany him. The water never seemed twice alike, and the sunsets were glorious.

"And the beauty of it is," Mr. Monroe would say, "it is always like this summer and winter, never cold as it is on the Atlantic coast. They tell me there isn't a day all the year around, when one cannot bathe in comfort."

They became great chums, as Scott had predicted, and before she knew it Joan was telling him all about her life in Hillview, and about Jack in particular.

"We've set our hearts on going through college together," she said. "He's determined to be a lawyer, and I'm sure he will make a great success, for he is such a student and speaks splendidly."

"If Jack is at all like his twin," replied Mr. Monroe, "he must be a fine fellow. You may tell him for me, that she has won our hearts and that it will be hard for us to let her go, when the time comes to return home."

Joan flushed with pleasure and continued earnestly,

"Then I haven't told you about Lidy Clay and her sister. Jack and I found them at the foot of the hill in an old cabin. You couldn't help but love them if you knew them. It's strange," she continued with a sigh, "but I can't get over the feeling I have, that there is a resemblance between Lidy and one of our old family portraits. Of course it is only imagination for, as mother says, there can't be anything in it."

Her listener was so sympathetic that Joan was soon repeating the story of the reckless son who had broken his father's heart and been disinherited, over sixty years ago, and then about shiftless Pappy Clay and Maw, who, while only a mountain girl, had received sufficient education to be ambitious for her children. She ended by saying,

"Even though there is no relationship, mother thinks we ought to do all we can to help them."

She stopped, looking out at the waves rolling

up on the shore. Her eyes were misty, as they always were when she talked of Lidy and Happy Day.

Mr. Monroe was much interested, and as they walked slowly back to the cottage, he asked her many questions about the children.

"While any connection between the Clays and the Claytons would be most improbable, your interest in them is certainly beautiful, and from all you say, they must be deserving of every good that can come to them."

One morning at breakfast, Mrs. Monroe exclaimed,

"While we are all enjoying the life here very much, I feel we should know something of the other resorts, so I suggest that we spend tomorrow at Ocean Park. That will give you an opportunity to see the real life of the beach and appreciate what it means to the people of all classes to have these great pleasure grounds, absolutely free. On Saturday afternoon the ocean front is always crowded with those who are worn with the week's toil, from the bank clerk, whose brain is fagged from hours over his accounts, to the shop girl, who finds herself well nigh exhausted, to say nothing of the tired mothers with fretful children to whom the fresh sea breeze brings renewed strength."

"Can Mar'quita and Morris go, too?" asked Bob, who saw an exciting day ahead.

"Yes, and we'll take a real beach lunch for you children—wienes and peanut butter sandwiches, besides dill pickles."

"Good 'nough," was Bob's response, and he was off like a shot to tell the other children of the good time ahead.

It was scarcely more than fifteen minutes' ride in the electric cars. When they reached the great resort, the fog had not lifted and the pier with its varied attractions was still veiled in mist. The ocean was fine and Joan caught Helen's arm, exclaiming.

"See, the white caps! Isn't it glorious?"

Many were already in the water, and the young people, with Mr. Porter, lost no time in joining them, while Mrs. Monroe and her husband found seats where they could watch the fun and at the same time take care of the lunch boxes.

There were great floating buoys to ride the waves, and Mr. Porter engaged two of them. They were marvelous creations of inflated rubber painted to represent fish, and Bob was delighted at bounding far out with Mariquita by his side. His uncle soon called him back, however, insisting that they must content themselves nearer the shore where the others who were less

daring might share in the sport. After an hour or so, Mr. Porter led the way to the bath house where there were hot and cold plunges, which Joan and Helen enjoyed immensely. Scott found he could even take the "high dive" without much trouble.

All at once Bob asked anxiously,

"Isn't it most lunch time?" and on consulting the clock, there was a hurrying back to the beach.

"I'm certainly 'most starved," Joan said, happily; "won't those sandwiches taste good?"

"There are five each," said Helen, laughing. "I counted them to be sure, and three wienes for each one."

"Here's a nice place," suggested Scott, "near this stone wall. If the rest of you will wait, I'll go for the lunch boxes. Mr. Porter, you're going to share it with us, aren't you?"

"Well, no," he replied. "I think I heard your father and mother say something about a fish dinner," and he started off in the direction of a restaurant, while the others seated themselves comfortably on the sand.

"It's lots more fun to eat on the beach than in a stuffy room," remarked Joan as Scott came in view laden with the packages.

"Why is the Sahara desert a good place for a picnic?" he called out. "I think the answer

would apply equally well to Ocean Park." Then, as the others "gave it up," he continued, "Because of the sand-which-is, there."

"Oh, Scott, that's as old as the hills," commented his sister, scornfully, passing the pickles.

"True, nevertheless," Scott said, soberly. "These wienes are dandy."

"There's a peanut man!" suddenly shouted Bob, between bites, "and he's got popcorn, too. If you folks will let a fellow have a few nickels, I'll catch him."

He was back in a moment with a bag of popcorn apiece and ten cents' worth of peanuts.

"I think I never enjoyed a picnic lunch so much," said Joan. "Just look at the beach. Isn't it like one big umbrella?"

While they had been eating, the crowds had thickened and the beach literally assumed a kaleidoscopic appearance. There were innumerable umbrellas of orange, red, green, yellow and blue, as well as of gaudy stripes. Under these, both men and women were already snatching delicious naps or half dozing over favorite books. There was the indefatigable knitter who confided to the smiling idle girl near by that "She was on her fourth sweater since May, and had promised six more for the church fair in November." Dozens of people in vari-colored bathing suits,

with sunburned arms and legs, paraded up and down, as if proud of their recently acquired coats of tan.

At two o'clock came the band concert, where they were wedged in so tight that Bob whispered to Joan,

"You couldn't tell where one began and the other left off."

During the intermission, the young people decided to go to the pier, the Dane children having been there many times before. If possible, this was more crowded than either the beach or the band concert and far more "'xciting" Bob thought to himself.

"The only show on earth!" shouted a stentorian voice that made them all jump. "You are missing your only chance to see a man eating glass, if you pass this by."

"Get your fortune told!" came through a megaphone on the other side, while, "Three chances for a nickel," made Bob drop Joan's hand and disappear, emerging in a few minutes triumphant, with a small puppy under his arm.

"I won him!" he shouted wildly. "On the second chance, too. Isn't he a dandy?"

"What are you going to do with him?" asked his sister, sternly. "You can't possibly take him back to Hillview."

For a moment the young man's face fell, but Bob was resourceful. He whispered.

"I'm going to give him to F'lic'ta later on. Don't tell her now."

When they reached the merry-go-rounds, the children stopped fascinated; the music was entrancing, the animals most gay.

"I always go round twice any way," remarked Princess Curly-Locks, very firmly.

"That isn't enough for me," put in Mariquita. "I'll choose three times on a kangaroo and twice in the chariot."

"I'm afraid it will be dark before we get back to the folks," Joan laughed, "but I wouldn't object, myself, to a ride on one of those galloping steeds."

Bob had been carefully considering the matter, while he hugged the puppy closer, and announced he liked a giraffe better than any.

They were on their third round when Mr. Porter made his way through the crowds.

"Time we were going home," he exclaimed, as the music slowed down and the prancing animals gradually came to a stop. "Have you had a good time?"

"Yes, indeed," came the chorus. "Can't we shoot the chutes?"

"Bless my soul," he rejoined, good naturedly,

"but you youngsters won't get home to-night. Now, mind this must be the last."

Tired, but thoroughly satisfied with the day at Ocean Park, they left for home shortly before six o'clock. The crowds were still coming for a late afternoon bath, and for the evening concert, while old ocean was boisterously dashing against the pier.

This excursion was followed by others, a few hours being sufficient for nearby resorts, while a day was devoted to Long Beach, the other side of Los Angeles.

They were so charmed with this beautiful strand city that Helen declared she would be perfectly happy if she could stay a whole season at Hotel Virginia.

Then Moonstone Beach was interesting, especially as they were most fortunate in finding many semi-precious stones cast up by the waves.

"I've enough for every one home," cried Joan on her way back. "I shall have them polished and mounted for Christmas, every one of them, and the best of it is, I picked them up myself."

As they approached their cottage, a blue-coated messenger boy swiftly passed them and they were surprised at seeing him leave his wheel at the gate, mount the steps and ring.

"I hope no one is sick," Joan said, anxiously,

her thoughts at once on the dear ones so far away. "A telegram can mean almost anything."

"Don't worry," answered Scott, hurrying ahead, and as they reached the porch he handed the yellow envelope to Mr. Porter.

There was a silence as the flap was broken and a visible sigh of relief when Mr. Porter said,

"It's simply a business matter, but it necessitates my immediate return—we must leave Saturday at the latest."

Bob's face fell, as he said,

"I haven't done nearly all the things I wanted to."

"Can't help it," was his cousin's reply, "business is business and I promised your mother to bring you home with me. This is Thursday, one day more, so make the most of it."

It was useless to argue or to mourn, so they soon settled down to discuss how Bob should spend the last precious day. There were all sorts of things proposed, from a trip up Mount Lows, to fishing for barracuda. The Princess Curly-Locks was on the porch, snuggled in the big swing chair with Joan. She was very quiet, evidently thinking hard. After the others had made all the suggestions they could think of, she vouchsafed, rather timidly,

"P'raps you'd like to go to the ostrich farm."

Bob beamed—that was something different.

“How’d you know I’d like ostriches?”

“Everybody likes them,” was the demure answer. “Then there’s the alligators.”

“All’gaters!” Bob nearly jumped out of his seat. “Wouldn’t that be the best ever!”

“I’ll take you,” she continued happily. “I’ve been as many as five times.”

“I speak to join the party,” put in Joan. “I’ve always wanted to visit the Pasadena Ostrich Farm, so Princess Curly-Locks, you’ll have to take me, too.”

Felicita nodded her curls in gratified assent, much pleased that her suggestion had proved so popular.

CHAPTER XII

OSTRICHES AND ALLIGATORS

IN SPITE of the fact that "Princess Curlylocks" said she knew the way "perfeck-ly," Mr. Monroe thought best to give Joan explicit directions how to reach the ostrich farm and drew a diagram illustrating the way from there on to the alligator ranch. Thus safeguarded, the three made their way through the crowded streets of Los Angeles, Bob proudly piloting his charges.

There was a succession of red and yellow cars, crisscrossing in every direction. Bob cried suddenly,

"There 'tis and no mistake—South Pas'dena."

It seemed a long ride to the children. The other passengers were greatly amused as Bob repeatedly inquired if they were not near the "ostrich feather farm"? Even Felicita began to think they had been carried too far, when suddenly the conductor called, "Ostrich Farm," and out they clambered.

The farm is a unique place, with its pleasant park of semi-tropical trees and flowers. There

are seats under the palms and live oaks where one can sit and watch the giant birds in the pens, and oranges are within easy reach, for, as every one who has visited there knows, oranges and ostriches are closely allied.

Joan and the children, however, were too much interested to be contented under the trees and pressed as closely as they dared to the wire netting of the ostrich pen.

"Look at their long necks," Bob cried, excitedly. "Just think if one of those fellows had sore throat."

"And their little heads and big eyes," said Joan then, as one of the awkward birds airily advanced. "Why, they only have two toes!"

"Wait till you see them swallow!" exclaimed Princess Curly-locks. "That is the funniest of all!"

The next car brought a dozen more visitors, and one of the keepers made his appearance to show them over the farm.

"The first ostriches," he began, talking rapidly so as to give them as much information as possible in a short time, "were brought to California over twenty years ago, and every one of them now in the United States is a descendant of this first ship-load of fifty birds. As you may imagine, they are very valuable; in fact, we have

one we consider worth as much as a thousand dollars."

Just then two especially dignified birds came running close to the rail, putting their heads over so suddenly that even Bob drew quickly back, and for the first time Joan noticed the sign,

"Keep away from the birds. They kick."

"Those are Mr. and Mrs. George Washington," laughed the guide. "They are among our favorites, and here come Mr. and Mrs. Taft. Over there in the corner are President and Mrs. Roosevelt. As a rule the birds are monogamous, but that fellow on the left has two wives, so we have named him Brigham Young."

Just then they were amazed at seeing George Washington proceed to fold his legs and lie down, while Brigham Young raised his wings high in the air, showing a remarkable expanse of bare legs.

There was a general titter among the bystanders, and Joan exclaimed,

"He looks exactly like a feather duster. The feathers aren't one bit like those on hats."

"The birds are plucked every nine months," answered the guide, "but of course the feathers have to be prepared and dyed before they are ready for the market."

"Are you quite sure the ostriches are not hurt when they are plucked?" asked a woman with a conspicuous Audubon badge on her breast.

"Absolutely sure," he asserted firmly, "watch the keeper, who is just entering the pen; there, he is hooding one now. It takes but a few moments to clip the feathers and later the withered stump will be removed painlessly. No, you needn't be afraid of wearing our plumes."

"Aren't you going to feed the ostriches?" inquired Felicita, anxiously, who had been treasuring two or three oranges she had found under the trees.

"Right away," he replied, obligingly, taking one from her hand and holding it high in the air.

A dozen or more ostriches came running from different directions with outstretched necks and they were all amazed to see the orange swallowed whole by a handsome bird with full black feathers.

"They are as greedy as chickens," laughed Bob, as he watched the round ball slipping down the long throat. "Must seem queer to have a neck like that."

Then the whole party was amused as Mrs. Taft spurted ahead and captured the next prize which the keeper offered.

It was hard to tear themselves away from so interesting a sight, but the next pen contained young chicks which they did not want to miss, and they all agreed there was nothing in the funny porcupine quills to even suggest a possibility of future fluffiness.

"We haven't seen any eggs," again prompted Felicita, who felt the responsibility of the expedition and was exceedingly anxious that nothing should be left out.

"I hadn't forgotten them," responded their guide as he led the way into a handsome show room and pointed out three or four large white objects near the door.

"What enormous eggs!" exclaimed Joan, examining them with interest. "I wonder how much they weigh."

"Pretty close to three pounds each," was the reply, "and they measure fully a foot in diameter. I believe I have shown you everything of interest about the farm. You may wish to make some purchases here. Come out under the trees again if you want to catch another glimpse of our birds."

"Let's go outside," suggested Bob, after a cursory glance around the room with its wonderful display of feathers, so the Princess Curlylocks and he wandered back to the park.

Joan bent over the glass case eagerly. How could she buy all she wanted for those at home and Helen and Mrs. Monroe? Cousin John had been more than generous with her spending allowance, but had warned her a little teasingly not to put all her eggs in one basket.

Still she could not resist the plumes, and finally selected a black neck piece for her mother, a white pompon for Mrs. Monroe, one pink plume for Helen, and one for Theo. Little Margie was to have a real egg as a curiosity.

It was a big box when it was wrapped and Joan felt very happy over her purchases, repeating as she went in search of the two children,

"They're lovely, every one of them."

The route to the alligator ranch proved complicated, and Joan consulted her diagram with some anxiety. She was bewildered by the cars continually passing, and had it not been for an obliging conductor who set them right in regard to their transferring, they might have lost their way entirely, but at last Felicita caught sight of the familiar sign and called out,

"There it is, opposite the big park."

Eager as they were to see the alligators, they were hungry too, and glad to agree with Joan's suggestion that they should sit awhile by the lake, in the park and lunch on graham crackers

and sweet chocolate. The children dabbled their feet in the water, and lingered for some time, throwing crumbs to the big white ducks that came close to the shore with their quacks of appreciation, until the Princess Curly-locks began pulling on her shoes and stockings.

"If we don't go soon, we won't have time for the alligators and they're more fun than the ostriches were," she said.

"Hooray!" cried Bob. He gave a quick lace to his shoes and in almost less time than it takes to tell it, they had said good-by to the ducks and were across the street.

No sooner had they entered the gate of the alligator farm than a red-haired man, whom they afterward learned was called Tom, came forward and asked them if they wanted to see the ranch.

"'Deed we do," cried Felicita, eagerly, "every bit of it, and you won't forget the baby ones, will you?"

"Not on your life," replied the good-natured man; "these creatures are special pets of mine, and it's a real pleasure to show them."

How anybody could really have any affection for alligators Joan felt it hard to understand, as she caught sight of the ugly, sprawling bodies, lying half in and half out of the water.

"Why, they're dead!" exclaimed Bob, disap-

pointedly. "I thought we were going to see live alligators. They're not moving a bit."

"Wait a moment, and you'll change your mind," replied the keeper, with a grin, and leaning over the railing, he struck one of the creatures with a stick.

Quick as a flash the alligator turned, opening and closing his great jaws with a snap. Even Bob looked frightened, and Joan shuddered.

"What horrible things!"

"Might be serious to fall among them, no mistake about that," resumed Tom, reaching over and taking hold of one of them. "Did you notice that they only move the upper jaw? They're mighty curious creatures. Then they have a kind of a trap door down their throats that opens and shuts, and the sharpest teeth you ever saw. They get new ones every year. You see they only eat about one meal a week."

"One meal a week!" repeated Bob in great surprise.

Tom resumed, with a grin,

"That's a purty good meal, however, and oughter last a while. It's just about feeding time and if you folks 'ul jest sort of wait 'round and sort of amuse yourselves looking about, I'll go get a little bite for them. In that pen yonder you'll find Louisiana Joe. He's over two hun-

dred years old and used to be the big fighter. That's what caused his torn jaw. Then you may like to watch 'em shootin' the chutes. That's their favorite recreation."

"Of all creatures!" exclaimed Joan, as they walked about. "I must say I think these are most horrible, yet there's something fascinating about them, too, and I believe that man actually loves them. I noticed he called one of them 'sweetheart.' "

"I think they're the cur'ousest," rejoined Bob, as an alligator dragged his way up an inclined plane without any help from the boy whose duty it was to prod those that seemed reluctant. Then, as he came down head foremost, "Look, now, he did it all himself. I wouldn't have thought he'd have sense enough." Then, turning his attention to Tom, who was coming in sight, with some immense hunks of meat in a basket, "Do you 'spose they'll eat all that?"

In reply, the keeper deposited the basket on the ground close to one of the pens where about a dozen alligators were lying dormant, and taking a piece, threw it in their midst. Instantly, they turned and, opening their jaws, simultaneously grabbed the meat; then with a dexterous twist, rolling over on their backs, succeeded in

getting a larger or smaller portion, according to their strength.

Joan gasped, and Tom grinned more than ever, as he said,

"Them's table manners for you. I call it 'the alligator twist' and a pretty neat trick it is, too."

"Is that the way they always eat?" inquired Joan.

"The very way, even in their native Florida, only, there they live on other creatures, or the weak little fellows that can't fight for themselves."

Stooping over, he gave a small piece of meat to one thin little 'gator that had not been able to get a scrap for himself.

"He'd have a hard time if I wasn't round to look after him."

The Princess Curly-locks, in the meantime, had strayed towards another part of the grounds where, "the babies are kept," Tom explained, as he followed her with the others. "The children all likes to hold 'em."

"Hold 'em!" cried Bob, his eyes round as saucers. "Can you do that?"

"Yes, indeed," he replied. "They're only three or four years old." As they reached the inclosure, he entered, and picking up a number

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of the funny little fellows, handed one to Felicita and another to Bob.

Joan drew back, feeling that the holding of even a baby alligator was a doubtful pleasure. Bob was delighted, and it was only after great persuasion that he finally gave up his plan of taking one home for Tony.

"He couldn't help but like it," he answered, as Joan argued against it, and was quite depressed, until Tom good-naturedly proposed that they have their pictures taken sitting on the back of an alligator.

"Are you sure it would be safe?" queried Joan, who could not refrain from a shudder.

"Sartainly," he replied, "nothing could be safer 'n this particular alligator. That's the only proper thing to do. We'll go right along now."

Tenderly replacing the babies in the pen, he escorted his party to what Joan called, "the biggest, laziest one of all."

They were all a little timid, even Bob, but Tom arranged them carefully on the immense back, Joan in the middle, while the children sat, one on each side.

"Now, reel still, jes' a moment while the camera man snaps you, and you'll have a picture to be proud of."



TOM ARRANGED THEM CAREFULLY ON THE IMMENSE BACK

"I'm glad it's over," breathed Joan, with a sigh of relief when she found herself once more outside the inclosure. "I don't know what mother and Jack will say when they see us on an alligator's back. Is there anything more to see, Tom?"

"Only those 'xtremely valuable hides drying in the sun, and a few little trinkets you might be wantin' to take to the home folks as a kind of reminder of what you may look back on as an int'restin' day."

"You're right. Perhaps we can find a purse for Aunt Johnny, or a bag for one of the girls," and she followed Tom into the little shop where there was a collection of articles for sale. Bob consoled himself by selecting an alligator scarf pin for Tony in lieu of the live one he had coveted.

"Well, Bob," said his sister, as they settled themselves in the car for home, "are you satisfied with your last day in Los Angeles?"

"'Deed I am," he responded with fervor. "I 'most believe it's been the best day of all," and he began counting off on his fingers other memorable occasions. "Won't I have lots to tell the folks though?"

"There's just one thing you missed," said Princess Curly-locks, disappointedly shaking her

brown curls; "we didn't ride on an ostrich."

"Never mind," Bob answered buoyantly. "I will when I come back next year."

By seven o'clock the next morning, the trunks had gone. Bob, however, kept out his bathing suit for a last plunge in the ocean. The puppy he had won in Ocean Park was duly presented to the Princess Curly-locks, in grateful recognition of all she had done for him. Mr. Porter and Mr. Monroe had enjoyed a last talk about the country in general and California in particular. Joan had entrusted her cousin with messages to Jack, Theo and Margie. The last good-bys were said, and by two o'clock, Bob and his cousin were on their way to Hillview.

CHAPTER XIII

JOAN'S NEW FRIEND

IT SEEMED lonely enough without Mr. Porter and Bob, especially as it was not long before there were other changes. Mrs. Dane and her children returned to Hollywood. The month's vacation arranged for by the fresh air fund was up and the little crippled boy went back to Los Angeles.

"It's fun living now," he told his friends when they came to bid him good-by, and certainly the fresh sea air had done wonders in bringing strength to the frail frame.

Scott and Joan would return from long tramps these days, hungry and tired, but glowing from the exercise.

One morning when they were off together on a hike, they came upon Miss Lottie. At least, they found out afterwards, it was Miss Lottie, although all they could see at first was a big sketching umbrella and a woman's veil lying on the sand a stone's throw away.

"What do you suppose she's doing, way off here by herself?" asked Joan, picking up the veil and venturing nearer.

"Taking a nap, probably. That's the usual thing around here."

"No, there's an easel, Scott. I do believe she's making a sketch. I wonder if she would be willing to show it to us?" Joan advanced with the veil as an offering of friendliness. The artist looked up and catching a glimpse of the intruder, smiled brightly.

"Thank you," she said, "the wind has been so strong, I wonder it hasn't blown me away, umbrella and all. There are difficulties connected with sketching by the ocean," adding as if in answer to Joan's eager look. "Perhaps you would like to see what I am doing, although it doesn't amount to very much."

"Oh, may we?" Joan exclaimed. She knew nothing of art, but as she bent over the sketch of sky and surf, she liked it and knew it had the real touch.

"It's perfect," she exclaimed, "from the big white clouds to the tiny skiff in the distance. How did you do it?"

"It's great!" burst involuntarily from Scott, standing somewhat awkwardly behind them.

Miss Lottie's eyes shone at the spontaneous

words. They were more complimentary than the two realized.

"I'm glad you like it," she responded. "If all critics were like you I should feel encouraged." Then, as they made a move to go, "You must come and visit me again. You'll always find me here with my easel."

Joan was by herself the next time she spied the familiar umbrella. As she made her way in its direction eagerly, the little woman recognized her and waved a welcome.

"There, it's too bad I haven't another camp stool so you can really be comfortable, for I want you to stay a long time. You know you are so appreciative, it's inspiring."

"May I sit here on the sand?" Joan settled herself by her new friend's side where she could watch her blocking in the background. "The beach is a place where one can do exactly as one pleases."

Like her mother, Joan had a sympathetic manner which always won confidences, and before Miss Lottie realized it, she was pouring out the story of her aspirations to this eager brown-eyed listener.

"All I care about is my painting and father planned to give me the best education possible. He was so proud because the professors at the In-

stitute said I had talent. There's such a difference between that and genius." She paused for a moment, looking out over the water, then went on more slowly, "After he died, it was different and now, I presume I shall have to give it up."

"No, don't," exclaimed Joan. "Don't do that. Just think with your love of art, to give up your painting."

Miss Lottie laid down her brush in a discouraged sort of way.

"It is such hard work to get a start, and you see I need more education. I ought to go to New York or some center to study." She stopped again. "But there, I'm not going to burden you with my affairs."

"Please go on, please," begged Joan. "You don't know how interested I am."

"Well, the amount of it is this. Father left so little that it is out of the question for me to think of going on. At first I thought I might make some money by selling my sketches, but it seems almost impossible to bring them before people unless one has influence, so last spring I gave up and took a course at the business college and will begin work as a stenographer the first of September."

"Isn't there any way except that?" asked Joan with quick sympathy.

"Not that I know of." Miss Lottie's gray eyes filled with tears. "I begged so hard for a vacation by the ocean that mother consented, and we are in that tiny cottage over yonder, and I am enjoying a few blissful weeks of sketching before I turn into a full-fledged stenographer." She closed her paint box with a vicious snap.

Joan was silent. There was nothing else she could say, no consolation she could offer then; so, with a warm, friendly handclasp, she bade Miss Lottie good-by and went back to the cottage.

She wrote Jack that very afternoon, not that she had any idea he could make a suggestion, but because, when in perplexity she was accustomed to turn to him.

"Some way you always understand even if you laugh and say, 'Joan has found another lame dog.' I know you will feel exactly the way I do. You see, she has talent, and all she needs is more instruction. It does seem such a pity to give it all up. Do suggest a way out."

As she started out to mail her letter, Scott called from a corner of the porch,

"Hello, there! Can't I go, too?"

She nodded her head soberly, and he started after her, divining something was wrong.

"Look here, Joan, what's up? Can't you pretend I'm Jack and tell me all about it?"

After she had once begun, it seemed natural enough to confide in Scott, especially as he had been with her when Miss Lottie was discovered.

"That is tough, isn't it?" he said thoughtfully. "She's the real thing and no mistake. Wonder if we can't think up some way to help her out, Joan. There are the folks on the porch now. Suppose we tell them about it. In union there's strength, you know!"

Joan gave him a grateful look and quickened her steps. Now that he had made the suggestion, she was eager to take the family into her confidence.

"Can't we do something to help her?" she asked eagerly, and Mrs. Monroe smiled.

"I shouldn't wonder if we could before the summer is over."

"Another of Joan's protégées," teased Mr. Monroe. "Hang Miss Lottie's portrait in the Hall of Fame with Lidy and Happy Day."

"Never you mind, Joan. Just you bring her right up here any time," Helen offered, impetuously. "We'll love any one you love."

Not long after this, Joan saw Miss Lottie passing their cottage and urged her to stop.

"Just a moment. You must," she pleaded.

"Mrs. Monroe and Helen have set their hearts on knowing you."

So the new friendship was started and all the family shared Joan's enthusiasm over the sketches. Even Mr. Monroe remarked more than once,

"She shows talent certainly, and ought to have a chance."

It was Miss Lottie who suggested the trip to Catalina one day when Joan and Helen were sitting near her on the sand, and Scott a little distance away was idly watching the bathers.

"That's one place you must go," she urged. "The bay of Avalon is lovelier than you can imagine. It is a paradise for artists. We spent a whole summer there the year before father died. It's like Italy, they say, with its wonderful blue sky—the Capri of California—in an ocean of perpetual summer."

"Of course, we'll go there," the girls promised. "You ought to guide us there because you know all about it."

"How about being seasick?" suggested Scott, overhearing the conversation and giving a mischievous glance at his sister.

"I'm not afraid," she retorted, quickly. "Are you, Joan?"

"No," Joan protested, "and if I should be, I

wouldn't mind. It would be worth it to see such a beautiful place."

"That's the true spirit," applauded Miss Lottie gayly, "and I shall be more than pleased to act as chaperone or guide or whatever you like to call me. You'll love it all from the glass bottomed boats to the flower covered hills."

The day chosen was as near perfect as could be, the swell on the water being scarcely perceptible. After the early fog had lifted Catalina Island could be plainly seen, a purple object in the distance.

The two-hour trip across the channel was full of interest. From time to time, they were startled by glimpses of flying fish or an occasional spouting whale, and more than once Joan cried,

"Isn't it too bad Bob isn't here? He would have been crazy over it all."

Fairly out in the bay, little islands came into view. Joan cried out in sheer delight at the crystal-like quality of the water.

"Even more transparent than Tahoe," she said. "Remember where we walked that day, Scott?"

There was a dreamy look in Miss Lottie's eyes as the magic island drew nearer and she softly quoted,

"Where fall nor hail nor rain nor any snow,
Nor any wind blows hardly, but it lies,
Deep meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
And bowery billows crowned with summer
seas."

The steamer docked and dozens of small boys promptly presented themselves, eager to dive for coins. At Miss Lottie's suggestion, Scott had provided himself with change which he divided with the others, and they took turns throwing pennies, while the youngsters plunged into the water.

"The very first thing to do," said Miss Lottie, after they had watched the sport for some time, "is to see the submarine gardens. If we hurry we can catch this boat, I think." She read the names, amusedly. "*The Philadelphia*, pretty ambitious name for such a little craft."

The seats were ranged along the sides, and the center was of plate glass. As the motor chugged, and they pushed out into the bay, the bottom of the bay could be distinctly seen.

"Scott, just look at that wonderful seaweed!" exclaimed Joan. "It's actually growing like trees and flowers! I never dreamed it was like this under the water, it's a real garden."

"And the jelly fish and star fish," Helen was leaning far over the glass as she spoke. "I've

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looked so hard I feel almost like one myself."

"No more unexplored wonders of the deep!" shouted Scott. "This beats Jules Verne and his 'Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.'"

Miss Lottie pointed out a chambered nautilus, repeating half under her breath,

"This is a ship of pearl."

There were numerous other steamers and row boats, filled with tourists, beside the fisher craft, for Avalon is famous for its tuna, yellow tail, bass and other delicious fish. Here, too, was a host of eager boys clamoring for chances to dive for the opalescent abalone shells, and when *The Philadelphia* landed them at the wharf, Joan and Helen were both happy in the possession of particularly choice specimens.

"How beautiful they are!" said Helen, examining hers closely and admiring the opalescent tints.

"Yes," mused Joan, "the abalone fish have something even better than 'marble halls' to live in, and as usual the Vandals have to come and take their homes away. I know now about the beautiful jewelry your mother sent Christmas. It was all inlaid with pieces of the shell."

"I am ready for one of those fish dinners here that people talk so much about," interrupted Scott, and Miss Lottie assenting, he led the way past countless curio stores. In one place some

men were weighing an enormous tuna, while small boys cried out everything possible for sale from fish eyes to portières of shell. They were immensely interested, too, in the tents and quaint cottages, Joan comparing them to Noah's Ark houses while Miss Lottie gayly cried,

"Catalina's the playground of all California."

After the dinner, which more than fulfilled even Scott's expectations, Miss Lottie proposed they should climb the hills.

"There isn't time to do much but I would like to show you a few of my favorite haunts," she told them, and they turned from the beaten tourist ways to a less frequented path, along which there was a perfect riot of wild flowers. They went into raptures over the Indian Paint Brush, California holly and countless other plants that were new to them, Miss Lottie re-iterating,

"It's nothing to what it is in the spring time. The hills are covered with flowers. You see, it's always lovely in Catalina, Indian Summer from January to January."

They were not half ready to go when the boat whistle sounded and there was a hurry and scurry to reach the steamer in time.

Joan and Miss Lottie stood long at the stern watching the rocky island slowly fading into purple distance.

"Such a glorious day!" said Joan, softly. "Catalina would always be interesting, but we never could have seen it as we have without you to guide us."

"I'm so glad," answered Miss Lottie. "It's one of my favorite haunts, and I love to have my friends appreciate its real beauty. Then you don't know what a pleasure it is to do anything for you, who have done so much for me."

"We haven't done anything. I only wish we could." Joan's voice was low and sympathetic.

"Indeed you have," was the earnest answer. "It's been everything to me just to have known you at this time. The world seems to have changed. I begin to think the outlook isn't so dreary after all. I've made up my mind to this—that I'm not going to give up my art. I'll have Sundays and odd times to paint and perhaps I can save enough to go East and study before I'm quite an antique. Who knows? Maybe I'll be famous at sixty like Corot."

"You mustn't even think that way," Joan told her, lovingly. "Just hope and hope until it must come true."

"You're a regular rainbow of promise, my dear," Miss Lottie answered, gently. "Let's hope that the hopes come true."

CHAPTER XIV

HUNTING A BUNGALOW

"It is about time to expect our household goods," remarked Mr. Monroe one evening. "They were shipped from New York nearly six weeks ago, so it's none too soon to turn our attention to house hunting."

"House hunting," Helen repeated. "What a perfectly fascinating thing to do in California. Only it will be hard to leave the beach, father, dear."

"We only engaged our cottage until August first. Your mother and I begin to think we'd like to settle down—it is nearly a year since we left New York, girlie."

"But, Dad," interrupted Scott. "Let's have something a little more definite. Is this particular home to be large or small, a cottage or a castle, and where shall our search begin, in Los Angeles or one of the suburbs?"

"We looked about a good deal before you came," his father replied, "especially in the city and Pasadena. While we found many attrac-

tive places we came to no decision, and since our acquaintance with the Danes, I am inclined to favor Hollywood, which, they tell us, is very desirable. Then, too, it is near enough to the beach for us to run out frequently. Helen wants, I know, a rose embowered bungalow."

"With a lemon orchard and fig trees and a hedge of lantana," Helen paused to take breath before she finished, "besides a pergola and a terrace."

"Whatever else this wonderful bungalow possesses, it surely must have a garage," Scott added. "Don't you agree, dad?"

Mr. Monroe assented, laughingly, as they all said good-night. Helen called last of all,

"Mind, don't any one be late to-morrow. We want plenty of time for our house hunting."

There was much excitement on the way to Hollywood the next morning, and enthusiastic exclamations over everything: the geraniums climbing to the roofs, the solid masses of bougainvillæas, the magnolias with their heavy white blossoms, and delicious fragrance. They were constantly calling each other's attention, first to one side of the car and then to the other until the last station was reached.

"Houses, yes, indeed," the agent responded, as they entered the office and ranged themselves be-

fore the desk, Mr. Monroe acting as spokesman. He added smilingly as he looked them over, "Guess you're from the East?"

As Mr. Monroe assented, he went on,

"Pretty enthusiastic over California? Most all strangers are. It's a mighty fine part of the country and no mistake." He ran down a type-written list with his finger. "Here's an unusually attractive house, on a side hill, three stories on one side and only one on the other. It was built by a man who knew how to make the most of a situation. The living room is finished in some kind of wood from Hawaii that looks like satin. Then there's a wonderful view from the terrace. It's a bargain."

"Has it a garage?" asked Scott.

"Yes, indeed, in a most convenient place, under the house; couldn't be better."

Scott glanced at his father, who reflectively shook his head.

"No, my boy, no side hills for me. My climbing days are over."

"But, father, it has a garage."

"Can't ride all the time," was the reply; "besides, I'm not as sure of that automobile as you appear to be."

Scott laughed, and Mrs. Monroe settled the matter.

"It's quite too large for our purpose. Have you no bungalow?"

"Plenty of them. In fact whole streets of nothing else. Would you care to have me drive you to some of them?"

"Why couldn't Scott and Joan and I wander around a little by ourselves," suggested Helen. "Just while you and father go in the car? It would be no end of fun."

The agent selected three keys from a bunch and handed them to Scott with a few directions. "You'll have no difficulty in finding your way around, and any one will be glad to direct you if you need any help. I will bring your mother and father back to the office at one o'clock."

Hollywood is such an attractive suburb set with the boulevard winding like a ribbon at the base of steep, picturesque mountains, the avenues lined with palms and pepper trees, and the air sweet with the scent of lemon orchards. Scott counted three varieties of palms, and they all agreed they liked the date palms best, although Helen declared she was longing for the ones that looked like big fans when the branches waved in the wind.

"Just like big palm leaf fans," she said.

Passing the vine covered library, they looked up one avenue shaded by pepper trees which met

overhead like the elms of a New England town. Joan was delighted with a glimpse of last year's berries, showing pink among the flowers, and the tiny green berries, not yet fully formed. So, wandering they came upon a beautiful house on the Moorish style, with a wonderful garden of choice flowers.

"This must be the home of the famous painter," remarked Scott. "I've forgotten his last name."

"Paul de Longpré," Joan prompted. "They say he chose Hollywood because he could raise greater varieties of blossoms here than anywhere else." The thought of the painter reminded her of their artist friend, and she added earnestly, "How I wish Miss Lottie was with us. She said she had never been to Hollywood."

"I've been thinking," Helen spoke up suddenly, "that I would ask mother to invite her to spend a week with us after we get settled in our bungalow."

Joan's brown eyes sparkled.

"She could do some sketching here. Wouldn't a flower garden be lovely to her? I mean one like this. It's like an enchanted garden."

Later they found the little Catholic church, and the mission bell marking its place on the

King's Highway. Below the bell was a tablet and Joan read it, thoughtfully.

"Look, Scott," she said, "this was where Father Junipero Serra blessed the grove by his presence and said the mass of the 'Holy wood,' that's Hollywood, of course. Isn't that interesting?"

They passed all kinds of houses, most of them very different from the ones to which they had been accustomed in the East.

"I feel exactly as if I were in a book," said Joan as she caught sight of a little court; "if only the white rabbit were here, I could imagine myself Alice in Wonderland; and, Helen, here's a pergola," joyously, "with passion vine climbing all over it. Who would ever have thought of passion flowers outside of a conservatory!"

She darted down the path followed by the others.

"These are just story-book houses," said Helen, with a sigh of sheer contentment.

In front of the bungalow marked "for rent" was a fountain whose spray fell over rocks into a little pool where gold and silver fish swam merrily. Both girls paused, delighted.

"Scott, this is perfect," Joan said; "please unlock the door. I can scarcely wait to see the inside."

They let themselves in and looked about. It was such a "comfy" place, plenty large enough for a newly married couple without much furniture.

"But where would the family portraits go," mourned Helen, "and there isn't a single space big enough for my piano. It won't do, I know," and she sighed as she thought of the passion vine.

They came next to a large apartment house, with six or eight bungalows clustered around it.

"Did you ever see anything like these?" asked Joan, curiously. "They are actually named for the different kinds of flowers; here's one with 'Pansy' over the door, and I certainly never saw such big pansies as those by the front porch."

"That one across the street is 'Daisy,' and over in the corner is 'Poinsettia,' " called Scott.

Joan chose "Violet Cottage" and a dear little one that bore the name of "Ivy," and was completely smothered in vines. At a nod from his sister, Scott disappeared into the office, returning with a smiling matron who informed them that all the bungalows were occupied, but added, "I shall be glad to take your name and notify you as soon as any one is vacated."

"How many rooms have they?" asked Helen, suddenly remembering that something besides

flowers was to be considered, and her face fell at the answer,

"Four and a sleeping porch. Would you care to see the inside of one of them?"

"No, thank you, they are too small. We must have at least five."

They turned away regretfully and walked in silence a full block, until Joan caught Helen's arm eagerly.

"Look, there's one on the mission order with a real belfry. It wouldn't take much imagination to fancy we could hear the 'sweet-tongued bells.'"

If only Scott hadn't reminded them that mother had said positively she wouldn't consider two stories, they would have been sure their search was ended.

"Well," sighed Helen in utter weariness. "I don't see but what house hunting is as difficult here as anywhere else. Do you suppose we will ever succeed?"

"The only thing is to keep trying," rejoined her brother; "personally, I'm for that fine Colonial across the street."

"It's entirely too large, and it doesn't belong in California any more than a Queen Anne style or a Massachusetts farm-house," answered Helen, a little peevishly, for she was tired and nervous. "Are we very far from the Outpost?"

I heard some one mention there was a summer house there. It would seem good to rest and stop thinking about houses for a while."

"It's in sight now, sis," replied Scott, comfortingly, and, sure enough, a few moments' walk brought them to the historic site.

"So this is where the treaty of peace with Mexico was signed," Joan said, as they wandered through the grounds and looked with interest at the quaint adobe house, with its roof thatched with palm leaves, "and Scott, there's the old sycamore where seven Indians were hanged. Wouldn't Jack like it?"

They turned their steps in the direction of the summer house, a rustic arbor, almost completely covered with a wonderful morning glory vine, when a passing automobile stopped and some one waved to them.

"It's mother and father," Helen exclaimed, rushing to the street, and, in her excitement, completely forgetting how tired she was. "Have you found a house, yet?"

"No, not yet," Mrs. Monroe responded, "although we've seen bungalows by the dozens, all sorts and kinds. In one we counted five doors leading to the bathroom, and Helen, you would have loved the sun parlors, and the dear Dutch doors. But to be serious, the one that pleased

us most was Spanish in style, with a patio, filled with tropical trees. There was actually a banana and a cocoanut, besides a fig tree and a locust. I would have felt like deciding at once, only the rooms seemed small and I wanted to find out what you had seen."

"Oh, all sorts of lovely places," replied Helen, fairly jumbling her words together, "only some were too large and some were too small. We must have walked miles and we're all tired out."

"There is one other house," put in the real estate agent, "which I would like to show you. The owner only yesterday placed it in our hands. He built it himself and regretted so much leaving it, but he was obliged to return to Ohio, and so he decided to sell. It's only a little way from here," he urged, as Mr. Monroe consulted his watch, "and I am quite sure you would feel repaid for the time you would spend looking at it."

In response, Helen clambered in on the back seat, between her father and mother, while Scott and Joan crowded in on the front. In less than five minutes, the car stopped in front of a pretty white bungalow, and Helen said as they made their way up the path,

"It's the best of all, I do believe. See the brass knocker on the door, and a pergola and a

summer house covered with roses besides." She squeezed Joan's hand delightedly. "A real arroyo, too. Isn't that what you call an artistic dry ditch at the foot of a hill?"

Mrs. Monroe read aloud the name over the door.

"'Heart's Ease,'" she commented. "Henry, this is surely ideal."

It was as attractive inside as out; a sun parlor opening, by French windows, upon a terrace; a fireplace with built in book-cases in the living-room. "Big enough for our mahogany side-board," whispered Helen to her mother; three sunny bedrooms, besides a perfectly equipped kitchen.

"Yes, there is adequate provision for heating," the agent assured Mr. Monroe; "a good gas furnace in the basement which can be regulated from the living room."

"That's easier than Aladdin's wonderful lamp," commented Scott. "I always thought it would take considerable elbow grease when it came to the rubbing."

"Mother!" cried Helen, looking from one of the bedroom windows, "we haven't been out in the garden and it has everything beautiful."

"Here's one, two, three orange trees," called Joan from below, "enough to supply blossoms

for all of our weddings, to say nothing of picking one's own juicy orange for breakfast."

"And lemons, too," said Mrs. Monroe. "What is this tree?" She pointed to one similar to the orange, but smaller.

"That is grapefruit," replied the agent. "Perhaps you didn't know the fruit was so named because it sometimes grows in clusters resembling a bunch of grapes."

On every side new discoveries were made; a great bed of double petunias, snapdragons, nasturtiums, hydrangeas, in fact every kind of familiar flower was here magnified into what Joan called,

"Such glorified editions of themselves," that it was hard to recognize even old friends.

"What is the matter with this tree?" inquired Scott, who had been curiously inspecting a sycamore with its trunk filled with cement.

"That's the work of a tree surgeon," was the agent's answer. "The heart was fast rotting away and the tree would have died had it not been for this operation. Now it will live indefinitely."

"I certainly approve of preserving trees," said Mr. Monroe, "our country has been far too prodigal of its forests. Conservation of resources is a great thing. My dear, have you quite decided or shall we take another day for our search?"

Mrs. Monroe sighed, contentedly.

"It seems to me I should be satisfied to live here forever, Henry."

"Here, too," said Helen. "What do you say, Joan?"

"I can't imagine anything more perfect. I shall love to think of you in December, gathering your own grape-fruit, and sitting on this terrace."

"Yes, dad, do take it," urged Scott. "It's complete from the arroyo to the garage."

"Then, the matter is settled," Mr. Monroe said to the agent. "The next question is, how soon can we have possession? We expect our furniture by the first of August."

"That will give us the necessary time for the proposed changes. You would like the south bedroom in gray?" He turned to Mrs. Monroe.

"I think so," she said, "and cream for the smaller room, with a border of pink roses. That is yours, Helen. I think that is all at present, except the sleeping porch for Scott."

The next week was a busy one, especially for Mrs. Monroe and the girls. There were long consultations over the draperies and curtains. Miss Lottie's advice had to be asked about harmonious color combinations, and there were trips

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to Los Angeles almost every day. Sometimes they would return completely discouraged, again with radiant faces when they had found just the "right" thing.

"We must surely have filet curtains for the French windows and simple scrim ones for the dining room," Mrs. Monroe declared, as she puckered her brows over her shopping list one evening.

"Yes, and father promised I should have a new set of willow furniture in my room, and I do want ecru cretonne with pink roses for draperies and cushions," Helen pleaded. "It will be the very thing with the white wood-work."

Then there were rugs to be bought, and here Mr. Monroe and Scott were called into consultation, the result being that a choice oriental was chosen for the living room, and a soft gray and blue Chinese rug was found to finish out the blue-bird scheme Joan had suggested for the guest room.

In spite of the fact that they were so occupied in plans for their new home, they could not but grieve over leaving the beach. The sunset never seemed so beautiful as when Scott and Joan watched it, the last time, and she echoed the feeling of all when she said wistfully,

"How lonesome it will be without the splash of the waves. It seems like a living voice."

CHAPTER XV

"HEART'S EASE"

THE first of August came, without bringing news of the expected freight, much to their disappointment.

"Since our cottage here is already rented, I don't see but what we'll have to buy a tent and camp out," Scott said at the family council which had been called to consider what was the best thing to do in the emergency.

"It's just horrid," Helen declared, impetuously. "Things never do go right."

But Mr. Monroe decided they had better go to the hotel and wait there for the arrival of the furniture. So it was settled, and contrary to expectations they thoroughly enjoyed the few days at the hotel. There were dances every evening, and Joan heard of a ukulele teacher who guaranteed to teach one to play in ten lessons. Nevertheless there was rejoicing when Scott brought news the freight car had arrived at last.

The following days were busy ones, for there

were crates and trunks to be unpacked, pictures to be hung, furniture arranged, besides the hundred and one details that are necessary at such times.

"There," said Mrs. Monroe one morning, in a tone of satisfaction, from the top of the stepladder, where she stood carefully, adjusting the file curtains, "now they hang perfectly."

"Mother, dear," called Helen from a seat on the floor before the bookcases, "these shelves are exactly the right height for father's set of Dickens. Won't he be pleased? I think it's wonderful how everything has turned out. We were so disappointed because the furniture did not come by the first, but, if it had, we wouldn't have been at the hotel, and never would have met so many nice people, to say nothing of the dances. Things don't often turn out so well."

"I am not so sure about that," replied her mother, who was giving a last critical glance at the curtains before turning her attention to the mantel. "In my experience things usually work out for the best."

The grandfather's clock from the corner struck eleven and Helen exclaimed,

"What do you suppose has become of Joan? She hasn't come from the market yet, and she promised to arrange the little table in the sun

parlor for afternoon tea. Hadn't I better call Tako to take away the ladder?"

In response to the bell, Takonori Yoshimuri appeared with a bland smile on his oriental face.

"I remove the ladder at oncely, is there else I can do for honorable mistress?"

"Nothing at present," replied Mrs. Monroe, and Tako obsequiously bowed himself out, leaving Helen brimful of merriment.

"I can't help it, mother dear. He's just like a little Jap doll."

"I must say I am completely converted to Japanese help," Mrs. Monroe declared. "Tako is a treasure."

"Here comes Joan this minute!" Helen said, glancing out through the branches of the big pepper tree that almost completely shaded the window, "with her basket full of good things."

Tako had been watching, too, and hastened out to relieve her of the burden, while Joan hurried into the house,

"I'm sorry to be late, but it seemed as if I couldn't tear myself away. You've no idea of the quantities of fruit and vegetables, peas and beans, corn and tomatoes, besides all the funny squashes, and the fruits are luscious. Come into the kitchen and see for yourselves."

They found Tako engaged in carefully unpacking the basket.

"Strawberries," exulted Helen, as she caught sight of three boxes.

"They are always in market," replied Joan, "and they only cost ten cents for three boxes. I could hardly believe it, but I want you to taste the Logan berries. I call them bewitched raspberries. We can thank Mr. Burbank for them, and the figs are delicious. I couldn't resist eating one on the way home. Going to market in California is a perfect lark. You feel like Aladdin in the garden of enchanted fruit."

"This peach is perfect," agreed Mrs. Monroe, while Helen cried,

"I've counted four different kinds of plums and, Joan Clayton, I never saw such immense bunches of grapes."

"That's nothing, the bunches are all as large and larger. The grapes are just coming in. In another week or two there will be three or four different varieties, but now that you've satisfied yourself that I didn't exaggerate about the market, I want to see what you all have been doing."

She stopped at the threshold of the living room. How pretty it was; in spite of the fact that the bungalow was small, nothing seemed to be crowded or out of place. Over the mantel hung

the picture of Mrs. Monroe when she was seventeen. The lighting was very good, bringing out even the embroidery on the exquisite India muslin. Both the girls loved it. There was something quaint and wonderfully charming in the whole treatment. Helen never tired of admiring the slim, tender-eyed girl with morning glories in her hand, and behind her a river view from an embrasured window.

On the opposite wall was a small oil painting of Helen as a little girl, very demure, but with the promise of mischief even then in her eyes.

From the pictures, Joan’s eyes wandered to the rug and the old fashioned solid mahogany furniture.

“Every time I look around it seems cozier,” she said. “We must have our tea this very afternoon.”

She arranged the drawn work doily daintily and unpacked the Japanese cups and saucers. Just as she added the finishing touch, a single rose in a slender vase, Tako announced luncheon. The three seated themselves at the table, and, as he served them noiselessly, Mrs. Monroe said with a little sigh of relief,

“This is truly ‘Heart’s Ease.’”

As the days went on, life in the little bungalow was more and more of a delight. First, in the

mornings came the pleasant task of picking flowers, and it was indeed a rare occasion when every vase in the house was not filled with roses or blossoms equally beautiful. Once Helen brought in a Magnolia bud, placing it carefully in a bowl of water and was amazed, a few hours later, to find it opened into an enormous flower. Then it was such fun to look for oranges under the trees, and while it was not "the season" they found them all the sweeter for having hung so long.

"I'm finding out something new every day," exclaimed Joan as she came in with an apron full of lemons. "Who ever heard of a tree having flowers and fruit at the same time? Look at this," and she held out a fragrant blossom. "Tako says the juiciest lemons grow nearest the ground, and that's the reason the branches are pruned down. How much I shall miss it all when I am back in Hillview, but there will be the apple trees, and nothing, after all quite takes their place. I suppose in California, Margie would have her playhouse under a pepper tree."

"What do you think?" put in Helen. "I'm sure I heard a really truly mocking bird last night, only I was so sleepy I couldn't wake up."

"A mocking bird," repeated Joan. "Do you suppose it will sing again?"

Mrs. Monroe laughed.

“I am told they often sing all night when the moon is full. Some people think it’s altogether too much of a good thing.”

Miss Lottie was coming to visit them that day, and when she arrived, declared, while she had lived most of her life in California, she had never seen a bungalow quite so charming.

“What dear little knockers you have on the bedroom doors!” she said, “and Helen’s pretty wicker set, and Joan’s blue bird scheme!” As she stopped to catch her breath, Miss Lottie nodded brightly. “Yes, yes, yes, I love it all, and with your permission, I will paint a flight of blue birds on that further wall, as a symbol of happiness for you all.”

“The very thing,” cried both girls together, “that will give the finishing touch to the whole color scheme.”

With Miss Lottie’s visit, came new interests. There were favorite places to show her, and many suggestions to offer in regard to what they considered choice subjects to paint. They were somewhat surprised when she said mysteriously:

“You know an artist is a privileged person, and you must excuse me if I choose something different from any you have mentioned.”

“I think I know,” said Joan, “the little vine covered church.”

"I'm sure there's enough in Paul de Longpré's lovely garden to furnish material for at least ten years," Helen declared.

Scott looked over at them smilingly,

"A mountain peak for mine, please."

"You're wrong, every one of you," was the artist's reply. "You'd never guess in the world. It's my own special discovery."

"Do tell us," teased Helen, on tiptoe with curiosity.

"I'll do more than that. I'll take you there this very minute and see if you don't agree with me."

A walk around the corner brought them to a small one story house over which climbed a sweet scented honey suckle. It was very different from the bungalows to which they had now become accustomed, and Joan said in a rather disappointed tone,

"It's like the little houses at home."

"Oh, it's too old fashioned, Miss Lottie," Helen echoed.

"Don't make up your minds too quickly," was the laughing rejoinder, as she led the way by a tiny path around the shed to the old fashioned garden. Then, triumphantly, "Did you ever see anything like this? Our grandmothers might have had such a garden. Here's mignonette."

She knelt beside the flower bed. "Doesn't it smell sweet? And larkspur, beside four o'clocks and sweet alyssum. Then it isn't often in California one comes across a genuine grape arbor, not in the least bit like a pergola, and you scarcely noticed the trumpet vine on the shed."

Joan had discovered some lemon verbena, and was sniffing it delightedly, and Helen exulted over a big sunflower.

"What I can't understand is how you ever found such a lovely spot. I never would have dreamed there was anything like this behind the house."

"Well," continued Miss Lottie, "I saw the trumpet blossoms, and when a tall holly by the side of the path, nodded an invitation, I couldn't resist, but walked right up to the door and rang the bell."

"And then?" pursued Joan.

"A dear old lady answered the summons and was delighted when I asked her if I might see her garden. She told me she was from New England and when she came here years ago, she planted the same kind of flowers that were in her mother's garden. In fact she brought many of the seeds with her, but, she added, the flowers are bigger and finer than they are back east. Well, to make my story short, I asked her if I might

paint her garden, and she was pleased and told me to come whenever I liked, so I'm going to begin to-morrow."

After that the little artist spent every morning among the old fashioned flowers, always coming back happy with some exquisite bit of color, and while she was busy with her sketching, Joan began her ukulele lessons, determined to learn as soon as possible so as to be able to play duets with Helen.

"It's so pretty with the mandolin, and isn't at all hard," she told them after her first lesson. "It's all in the way you skip your fingers over the frets. Professor M—— says the word ukulele means 'bouncing fleas,' which expresses it exactly."

"Altogether," Scott complained, "the girls were too busy for anything," and more than once he wished they were back on the beach. "I've scarcely had a moment alone with Joan since we came to Hollywood," he told his mother.

Added to everything else, invitations for tennis and dances kept coming from the hotel, and he was expected to act as escort although he couldn't for the life of him see why the girls enjoyed that particular crowd so much. He would have had a hard time of it, if it hadn't been for the secret between himself and his father, and gradually this

came to be all engrossing, necessitating many trips to the city, and long consultations. If the others had not been so occupied with their own affairs, they would have wondered about the catalogues which were so quickly smuggled out of sight at their approach. Once Helen caught Scott’s words,

“But, father, it’s the best climber,” and she remarked carelessly to Joan,

“Father and Scott evidently have a gardening bee. Every one gets it here. I overheard them talking about different varieties of roses. They must have quite a collection of seed catalogues by this time.”

One day Miss Lottie handed Joan two or three little verses, with a half apology,

“I wrote them in the garden, and they express the way I feel. It’s all so peaceful there, I forgot I have any cares or worries.”

Joan was delighted and read them aloud to Helen, who insisted that the others should hear them.

“This very evening,” she insisted, then, as Miss Lottie expostulated, “please don’t say a word. We’ll have all the garden sketches on exhibition, too. Father and Scott have scarcely seen them.”

When the family came in from dinner, the room looked like a veritable garden, with sketches

arranged on mantel, tables and easels. And they were beautiful, glowing with color. The old shed had been invested with particular charm, and the grape arbor was transformed into a magic background of masses of flowers. While the others were warm in their praise, Mr. Monroe made one comment, but Miss Lottie felt that was worth more than all the rest.

"You paint the sunshine itself into your work."

"And one can almost smell the honeysuckle," Scott added, enthusiastically. "There are not many who can make one do that."

Then, as every one waited expectantly, Joan began reading the lines clearly, and sweetly,

"To an Old Garden."

I know a nook all free from care,
Where roses sweet and posies fair
Smile at each other all the day,
As if there were no other way.

Where hollies climb their ladders green,
Like Jack's of old, grown from a bean,
And climb and climb and never stop,
Until the last one stands a-top.

The golden glow, like sun above
Shines over all with constant love,

And sweet peas swing abroad their scent,
To mingle with the mignonette.

There's poppies red and poppies white,
And poppies golden with delight,
And where the gentlest flowers keep tryst,
Is love-lies-bleeding and love-in-a-mist.

Ah, dear, delightful old time garden,
Thy shady paths and flowers gay,
I love, and in my heart I trace
Sweet memories of this quiet place."

As she finished, a silence fell over the little group, broken by Mr. Monroe, who said,

"We didn't know you were a poet as well as an artist, Miss Lottie. The lines are exquisite. A bundle of sentiment like you is hardly the stuff of which a business woman should be made."

Miss Lottie impulsively rose, and taking one of the sketches, pressed it into his hand, saying,

"I made this for you, for I know you love hol-lies. It's the last one I shall paint, as I must go home to-morrow."

"But you shouldn't give it away," he demurred, "to my mind it is one of the choicest," but as she urged, he finally accepted.

"I shall prize it greatly, for I have a special

weakness for hollyhocks, as you guessed, but what is this about your going away?"

"I have already stayed longer than I expected and—" Miss Lottie hesitated as flushed and pleased as one of the girls.

"Never mind if you have," he said. "Scott and I have a special reason for not wanting you to go."

"Yes," echoed Scott, "we have planned a big surprise for the whole family and you must surely stay, please, now, Miss Lottie."

"How mysterious!" exclaimed Helen, slipping her arm through Scott's. "How long will it be before we know this wonderful secret? Suspense is very wearing."

"You'll have to wait until Saturday morning," Scott remarked, firmly. "And I advise you girls to make no engagements for the future. Your time from now on will be fully occupied."

Joan laughed.

"I'm convinced it's something nice, from the little twinkle in Mr. Monroe's eyes. Miss Lottie, you mustn't go," and the result of it was, the little artist telephoned her mother that she had decided to stay longer at "Heart's-Ease."

CHAPTER XVI

THE SURPRISE

“WELL, what do you think of it?” asked Scott, proudly.

The “it” referred to was a seven passenger touring car of the latest model, standing before the bungalow.

They were at breakfast when the “honk, honk!” of the machine was heard at the gate, and Scott and his father started from their seats motioning for the others to follow.

“What do I think of it?” repeated Helen. “It’s perfectly splendid. So that was the secret between you and father. Mother, tell me, did *you* know about it?”

Mrs. Monroe smiled.

“I suspected from the beginning, and later they asked my advice in the selection of the model.”

“And you never said a word, but let me think father and Scott were discussing the merits of different kinds of climbing roses. Oh, mummy,

mummy," and she laughed merrily over the success of the mystery.

Joan's eyes shone as they rested on the beautiful car.

"It will be wonderful to spin over these shore roads. I think California grows more glorious every day."

"So it does to all of us," said Mr. Monroe. "I am convinced that an automobile will be a great aid in seeing the country."

Miss Lottie noticed every detail of the new car, commenting especially on its grace and finish, and concluding, "One can tell it's comfortable, too."

"It's a corker," Scott declared, "bigger and more powerful than any car of other makes. She takes the hills so easily. You ought to see how fast she can go."

"Don't forget your promise, Scott," reminded his mother. "As I told you, I object to a terrific rate of speed. Besides being dangerous, it is far from enjoyable."

"Don't you be alarmed, mother, dear," Scott put his arms around her. "I will be a good boy and only mentioned that point, as an advantage in case of an emergency. That's the argument used in the catalogue. Hurry up with your veils and wraps for I am anxious to show you how well

I can drive. Never mind the goggles, this time, you'll soon have all the right togs."

Mr. Monroe was right, an automobile is almost a necessity in California, and from that time on they were in the car for hours, from morning till night. They soon found it was best to prepare for all sorts of weather, for while the mornings after ten o'clock, were invariably warm, by half past three, the fresh ocean breezes would come up, necessitating warm wraps, and towards evening, furs were almost indispensable. Scott proved a good driver, as he was cool and level headed, and while sometimes tempted to exceed the speed limit, a warning word from his mother or father, was all the restraint necessary.

There were miles and miles of roads as smooth as glass, leading in some directions, through what seemed like limitless groves of orange trees, again along boulevards lined with handsome homes; sometimes along the ocean front, and then winding beneath rugged mountains.

They passed across acres of vineyards, where whole families were engaged in picking grapes; the babies asleep in empty boxes, while the men and women filled crate after crate with the luscious fruit. Another time they saw hundreds of people at work preparing peaches for drying; cutting them in halves, removing the pits, carry-

ing them in crates on their heads to lay in long rows on the ground where, as Mr. Monroe remarked, "The California sunshine will do the rest."

They grew to love the olive trees whose soft gray tints contrasted with the deeper green of the other foliage, and were much interested when Miss Lottie told how the olives were prepared for market.

"I know all about it for we had a gnarled old tree in our yard and father used to pickle as many as we could use. He would gather them before they were quite ripe, soak them in lime water to soften them, and then throw them in a vat into which he kept salt water constantly flowing. In a week or two they were ready for bottling. It's an immense industry in this part of the country."

They found it great fun to buy fruit at stalls along the wayside or at the ranches themselves, and would come home with the tonneau of the car filled with all sorts of things. Even Joan admitted it was better than going to market.

They invited the Dane children to go with them on their first ride to Pasadena, crowding them all in, the two girls on the front seat and Morris squeezed in so tightly behind that for once he couldn't wriggle. At Felicita's suggestion they rode through Griffith Park, winding up at the

steep road by the Cahuenga pass, named for the kind old Indian of the long ago. Then they drove through the immense park, where the children were delighted at a glimpse of the animals and on across the city stopping a few moments to see the historic plaza and the first house in Los Angeles.

Pasadena has been called by many enthusiasts, "The Crown of the Valley," and it is one of the garden spots of the country, with its great hotels, crowded the whole year through, its handsome churches, its avenues famous for the home of the "millionaire colony," Scott put it.

"Oh, please, can't we stop at the Busch Gardens?" begged Felicita. "There are the funniest little gnomes all over, besides 'Little Red Riding Hood' and 'Hansel and Gretel,' and," she nodded her curly head, "lots of them."

"There's little houses, too, 'bout so high," put in Morris, making an attempt to move, and subsiding again into his place.

"And the house of Snow White and Snow White lying all dead," ended Mariquita dramatically.

"I confess I am as anxious as the children to see the gardens," said Mr. Monroe, as the car stopped at the entrance and the party alighted.

They spent a delightful hour in the sunken

gardens, wandering about and coming across all sorts of surprises in the way of Mother Goose figures, half concealed in the shrubbery.

Then Miss Lottie proposed they should stop at the San Gabriel Mission. "It's only a short distance, and miles never count with an automobile. Did you ever hear how the hostile Indians came to attack the party that were making the survey, but when the good padre held up a cloth with the Virgin's picture, they threw down their arms, crowding around with gifts in token of submission?"

As they drove through the streets of the quaint Mexican town, they were much interested in the adobe houses, and the women with the shawls thrown over their heads, who hurried past them as the mission bell called to vespers; even the children were quiet in the church where the devout worshipers knelt in prayer before the altar.

"It isn't one bit like the mission at Santa Barbara," said Joan, softly, as they walked through the cemetery and paused before the belfry, with the three bells hung at varying heights.

The San Fernando Mission was farther away, and they decided to go there the next day. The road lay through a most fertile country, the grain growing almost to the doors of the mission.

Olive trees nearly a century old and three ancient date palms gave an old world picturesque touch to the landscape. Miss Lottie was so charmed she declared she must make a sketch of the ruins, and while the others rested in the corridors, she seated herself on the ground under the shade of a eucalyptus tree and worked busily.

Scott had made a practice of never going anywhere without a kodak and he proceeded to photograph the mission from every possible viewpoint. There was an old caretaker who was greatly pleased when he pointed his camera at him, and showed his appreciation by telling many interesting things about the place.

"Perhaps you didn't know the first gold in California was discovered hereabouts. An old fellow was out digging onions not a stone's throw away, and what did he do but upturn some gold with the dirt."

"Really and truly?" asked Helen intensely interested as the caretaker stopped impressively, feeling he had made an impression.

"Yes, and that was the beginning of all the excitement, and I want you to know the first gold minted at Philadelphy came from San Fernando."

By the time he had finished, Miss Lottie had put away her brushes and came up to them

somewhat apologetically, displaying the result of her work, saying,

"I did it too hastily, but it will at least serve to recall the lovely spot. Sometime I'm going to make a tour of all the missions. Those old fathers had an eye to the beautiful and always selected picturesque places for their churches."

It was that same evening when they were all together in the living room talking over the day's excursion that Joan had an idea. She had been quiet for some time, but suddenly leaned forward, with the remark,

"I've thought it all out, and I'm sure it can be done."

"Joan's got a new one," laughed Scott. "Give her a problem and she'll manage to solve it sooner or later. What is it now?"

"Oh, can't you guess? It's how to bring Miss Lottie's sketches before people. It's come to me all at once. We could give a studio tea, and when people saw them, they couldn't help but admire them, and I shouldn't wonder if she could sell ever so many."

"But, Joan," said Mrs. Monroe, gently. "I don't want to throw cold water on the plan, for I think it a good one, but the house wouldn't hold enough people. You know a bungalow can't be expanded on occasion."

"And where could we get the people?" objected Helen. "We only know a few."

"I didn't mean to have it here," answered Joan, enthusiastically, "but at the hotel. I don't see how the proprietor could have any objection—and don't you see? There would be all of the hotel guests. I'm sure Mrs. Dane would help, and she knows ever so many society people, and perhaps the club women would take it up—"

"Joan Clayton, you're a genius," cried Helen, now roused to the possibilities of the idea. "I can see it all, Miss Go-ahead, the sketches arranged around the room where they would show to the best advantage, mother receiving with Mrs. Dane, and introducing the famous artist; Joan assisting in pointing out the merits of the pictures, while your humble servant, knowing nothing of art, might be of service in getting things ready, and filling in the chinks."

Joan laughed.

"You will give the final touch, if you'll just wear your irresistible pink crêpe dress and picture hat, and see that each one has a cup of tea."

"I predict a howling success," said Scott, gravely, "and offer my humble services as chauffeur on this auspicious occasion. If necessary, I will go into the highways and hedges and bring the guests in my car."

Miss Lottie was overwhelmed at the plan, but all joined in overruling any objection she presented, and Mrs. Monroe settled the matter by saying,

"I see no reason why it should not be successful, only you must have all of your sketches on exhibition, for it is always impossible to predict what may take the popular fancy and then besides people differ; one might prefer the views of the ocean, while others would choose a garden study."

They were so engrossed in their plans for the studio tea which was set for the following Tuesday that not one of them noticed Tako, who entered the room noiselessly, and held out a telegram on a silver tray to Joan.

"What!" she cried, "for me?" Then, as she tore open the envelope and hastily read it, "It's from Cousin John, listen: 'Much interested in your artist friend. I remit New York draft for fifty dollars. Purchase ocean sketch—if possible one showing pier.'"

Miss Lottie rose with clasped hands and shining eyes.

"I haven't anything worth so much as that," she exclaimed, but her words were drowned in the protests of the girls and Scott, too.

Joan gave a happy laugh.

"I was feeling so bad because Cousin John wasn't here, and now it's all right. Jack must have told him what I wrote about Miss Lottie and her lovely work."

"My dear," said Mr. Monroe, putting a fatherly hand on Joan's shoulder, "let us consider this a favorable augury for your studio tea."

CHAPTER XVII

THE STUDIO TEA

WHEN the proprietor of the hotel was interviewed in regard to the studio tea, he declared himself more than willing.

"Make yourselves at home, bring what you please, the lobby and the parlors will be at your disposal."

On Saturday, Scott drove Miss Lottie to her home a little distance from Los Angeles and they returned with twenty-five or thirty additional sketches, among which were two or three of the rocks at La Jolla, and a charming study which she had called "Fisher Boys at Catalina." Joan liked this best of all.

There was a discussion as to where the sketches should be placed, but Miss Lottie expressed her preference for the lobby, and Helen declared it a better plan, because it would be prettier to have the parlor for the tea table.

At Mr. Monroe's suggestion, their big bear-skin rug was brought and placed in the lobby. Joan worked with Miss Lottie helping to arrange

the studies on mantels and easels. Scott, assisted by Tako, was tireless in his efforts to hang the framed pictures as far as possible according to instructions, "Almost on a level with one's eye."

Helen and her mother arranged the parlors. The bronze Mercury, which Mrs. Monroe had purchased in Florence some years before, was placed on its pedestal in front of the big window, and Dallin's Medicine Man stood on the mantel. Everywhere were masses of flowers; golden glow, roses, carnations and asters.

The tea table was Helen's special corner. She set it herself with an embroidered centerpiece from a Genoese convent; and solid silver tea set. A crystal basket filled with delicate orchids gave the finishing touch.

By two o'clock everything was ready, Mrs. Monroe in lavender silk, Miss Lottie in soft gray *crêpe de Chine*, and Helen, like some budding rose in her pink dress and flower trimmed hat. Joan wore white and Scott watched her in boyish approval.

"Doesn't Joan look dear in that white dress with just that red rose in her dark hair?" said Miss Lottie.

"She'd look dressed up in a gunny sack," responded Scott. "It's just the way she has."

The Dane children came early in dainty lin-

gerie frocks and wide Roman sashes. They were greatly excited, for they were to assist in passing the delicious little rice cakes Tako had proudly presented to the honorable mistresses.

The Princess Curly-locks put up her face to Joan to be kissed, whispering, "I know some one who's coming after 'while."

"Who is it, dear?" Joan turned her attention to the tall vase in which she was arranging a great bunch of La France roses which had been sent in a few moments before from the hotel garden.

"It's Uncle Billy. He came last night and he's won'ful, Joan. He tells us stories all the time. Mother told him to come 'bout five o'clock."

"We'll be glad to see him," answered Joan, still absorbed in her task. Helen came up just then for a final consultation.

"Mother and Mrs. Dane have decided to take turns receiving guests and presiding at the tea table," she said. "Oh, doesn't it look perfectly lovely, Joan? And wouldn't it be awful if no one should come, and no pictures were sold!"

"Oh, but they will, I'm sure of it," Joan laughed. "Uncle Billy will be here anyway, Curly-locks says."

Notwithstanding there was a half hour of suspense when Mrs. Monroe had all she could do to

keep the girls encouraged. In spite of their efforts, Helen began to worry for fear their trouble had been in vain, and their spirits did not revive until the proprietor himself put in an appearance, quite overwhelming them with his genial words of praise.

"I certainly owe you young people a great deal for making my rooms so attractive," he said. "Don't be afraid, you will have plenty of visitors later on. About four o'clock will come the crush. I wanted to drop in early for a look for I want to keep one or two of these pictures myself. They are just what I have been wanting to brighten up the walls."

About half past three Mrs. Dane came in, the mother of the children. She was a pretty, nervous little woman with a lorgnette and had hardly time to breathe, she confided to Joan.

"But they really are charming, aren't they?" she said, looking over the pictures hurriedly. "Caught the California tone, didn't she? I'll take that 'Midday Strand' and 'Poppy Glow.' The children will love them. You haven't sold many, have you?"

"Only these, so far," Joan confessed.

"Really? Isn't that a shame? I'm going on to a garden tea, and have four calls to make, but—I'll help spread the news for you."

Scott passed her a few minutes later, 'phoning industriously at the little stand in the palm corridor.

"And it seemed as if she was calling up every one in Hollywood she knew," he told the girls. Inside of half an hour there began to be results. Car after car came leisurely up the drive and the lobby and garden began to fill up.

Helen had only time to flag signals of victory at Joan, so busy was she pouring tea while Joan piloted the guests deftly. Miss Lottie was beside Mrs. Monroe. Her face seemed transfigured with happiness as she saw people admiring her beloved work. It seemed as if she fairly bloomed into radiance under appreciation. Every time Joan passed her by, she smiled eloquently.

"You know," she confided to Mrs. Monroe, "I never would have dared do this by myself. It was all Helen's and Joan's plan."

"The Fisher Boys" was especially admired, which pleased the little artist much, it being one of her few attempts at figure work.

Joan was much attracted to a Mrs. Ingram, a sweet faced elderly woman, dressed in deep mourning, who showed great interest in the whole exhibit. She told Joan that her favorite was the picture of the ocean with the big clouds and the little boat in the distance.

"It is all so real and the 'distance' is wonderfully good."

"She was making that very sketch when Scott and I discovered her, and we fell in love with it at once, although we don't know anything about 'atmosphere' or 'distance,' " then, scarcely realizing what she was saying, Joan poured out Miss Lottie's story to her sympathetic listener.

They talked fully fifteen minutes, Mrs. Ingram asking many questions, and Joan answering until Miss Lottie and Mr. Monroe came up, when Joan eagerly seized the opportunity to introduce them to her companion.

"I'll see if I can bring you some tea, if you will wait here," she said.

It was half past four and, just as the proprietor of the hotel had predicted, there was a crush. As Joan elbowed her way with some difficulty towards the parlors, she stopped short suddenly. There was something oddly familiar about the tall young man who stood with his back towards her discussing the merits of one of the pictures with Mrs. Dane, who had returned. She was greatly puzzled; where could she have met him and what was his name? As she paused, lost in thought, she felt a little pull at her skirts, and looking down, saw Felicita by her side.

"Miss Joan," said the child, "please, Uncle Billy's over there talking with mother."

Just then the tall figure turned around, and to her surprise, she recognized the mining engineer they had met in Salt Lake City.

The recognition was mutual. He smiled and made his way to her side, eagerly holding out his hand.

"I never expected to see you here. I had two weeks' vacation and decided to put it in with my sister in California. I got in late last evening, and while she urged me to come and see the pictures this afternoon, she did not mention the names of the hostesses. While I hoped I might be lucky enough to happen across you somewhere in California, I do not remember that you said anything about Hollywood."

"No," answered Joan; "we didn't know there was any such place at the time we met you, but after a month at the beach, Mr. and Mrs. Monroe decided to buy a home in California, and it was really through your sister, who had a cottage near us, that we finally settled here. When the Princess Curly-locks told me that 'Uncle Billy' was coming out ' 'bout five o'clock,' I never for a moment guessed it might be you. I hear you can tell wonderful stories," she glanced up at him mischievously.

He laughed down at her, "Now that you know that 'William Stark' and 'Uncle Billy' are one and the same person, tell me about yourself. How are you, and are you in love with California? Although that question almost answers itself, for not to love California is worse than heresy. Did Miss Helen recover from the sprain she gave her ankle?"

"Oh, it wasn't at all serious," Joan said. "Here she comes now, so she can answer for herself."

Helen had turned her head and was amazed to see her talking so familiarly with some one who seemed a stranger. A second look and she recognized him as their Knight of the Mines, and there was a little added flush on her cheeks as she gave him her hand.

"What brought you to our studio tea? I can't understand it at all," she looked at Joan, who answered gayly,

"I can't stop to explain for I've been away too long already. He'll have to tell you himself," and she hurried away, leaving them together.

She returned to the lobby, full of apologies for her prolonged absence, but bearing the tea safely. Miss Lottie had been called away, but Mr. Monroe and Mrs. Ingram were so deep in conversation that the tea and apology were accepted with

a smile and little nod, as Mrs. Ingram went on, answering Mr. Monroe,

"There is no reason why I should not do so. I have plenty of money, and since my husband died, my life has been an aimless one. I would like to feel I was doing some good in the world. She seems like a charming young woman, and her work shows decided talent. Would three years in New York enable her to get what she should have in the way of education, do you think?"

"It would at least be a beginning," Mr. Monroe assented, "and after that she could doubtless make her own way." He turned to Joan with a smile. "My dear, Mrs. Ingram and I have been discussing your artist friend and she has expressed a wish to be of assistance to her. What do you think of a plan to send her east for three years and pay her expenses at any art school she might select?"

For a moment Joan could not reply, but as the full realization of what this would mean to Miss Lottie came to her mind, she caught Mrs. Ingram's hand impulsively,

"What can I say? If you only knew how grateful I am," her voice broke. "Some way I feel as if I couldn't begin to tell you all this means to her, only I'm sure you would never regret anything you might do for her."

"It seems as though Providence had led me here to-day," said Mrs. Ingram, gently, "for I was feeling very lonely. It is hard to live without an object in life, and when I saw the work of this little artist, and you told me of her disappointment and struggle to get a start, I became convinced that here was the opportunity for which I had been looking. Tell me, do you think she will object?"

"Object?" Joan gasped. "Object? She will think you are a fairy godmother. How lovely it all is! Another week and she would have begun her office work."

When Miss Lottie learned the good news, she was dazed at first. But as she tried to express her thanks, she ended laughing and crying together. It had been such a wonderful afternoon, and she had had so many compliments, she couldn't begin to remember them all, besides having realized nearly two hundred dollars from the sale of her pictures.

"And I was planning on that to take me to New York," she exclaimed, as she sat between Joan and Mrs. Ingram, one hand clasping that of each.

Mrs. Ingram smiled.

"You'll need fully that to get yourself ready for the trip, and you mustn't spoil my plan of

paying all the necessary expenses for three years. At the end of the time, we shall see; as soon as you have a ready sale for your pictures."

The next day Miss Lottie went home, for there was much to be done. The date of Joan's return had been fixed for the tenth of September.

"And you must go with me," she had said. "Jack has promised to meet me in Chicago, and you can get acquainted with him between trains, then we will see you off for New York before we take our train for Richmond."

Mrs. Monroe wrote her sister Margaret in New York asking if she would not have room in her apartment for Miss Lottie, ending with a postscript,

"I am sure you would find her a charming companion."

The answer came by return mail.

"I am delighted at your suggestion. Indeed, I shall be glad to have Miss Lottie with me. I shall be here the whole winter, except during the holidays, which I have promised to spend as usual in the Catskills with Sister Kate. Your little artist friend may like to accompany me, the scenery is so beautiful there."

"Imagine a person who had never been away from California," Scott interrupted, "in the midst of all that snow."

"We'll tell her to fix the birds' Christmas tree, won't we, Joan?" said Helen. "Wouldn't it be fun if you could go there again?"

Busy as they were in their plans for Miss Lottie, the girls found plenty of time for William, or Bill, as he insisted upon being called. The better they knew him the more they liked him, and Scott said he was an all around pal. He was ready for every kind of fun, danced well, played a splendid game of tennis and had a good tenor voice. There was scarcely a morning, afternoon or evening when the four were not together. His sister laughed as she complained that she scarcely saw him except at breakfast and the children mourned because Uncle Billy had no time to tell them stories.

"I never thought our 'Knight of the Mine' could bloom into such a cavalier," Joan said laughingly, as the two girls were cutting flowers for the house early one morning. Helen's head bowed a little lower over the bed of poppies. She was never so quiet as when any one discussed "Bill."

"I like him because he is so sensible," Joan went on. "Your father says just like Cousin John did, that he is a very good type of the young Western business man. How Jack would love to listen to his stories of the mines. What's

the matter, Helen? Don't you like him, too?"

"What does it matter whether I do or not since he suits every one else?" Helen answered with a little smile of mischief. "I should say with Miss Lottie that he seems a very likable commendable youth," and she ran into the house, laughing.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WIENE ROAST

"If only we could do something different!" urged Helen. "Bill's two weeks will be up Friday and we ought to make to-morrow a red letter day."

"Why not take him to the ostrich farm? Bob seemed perfectly satisfied with his celebration," answered Scott, as he stood proudly surveying his work. They were by the garage and Helen was watching her brother give a polish to his car. Not that Tako was in any way remiss in his care of the machine. On the contrary, he manifested the greatest possible interest in keeping it in apple pie order, but no matter how the brass furnishing shone, Scott never could resist a last loving touch.

"Don't be provokng," Helen pouted; "you know he wouldn't care a snap about ostriches and he has probably seen loads of them. I mean something especially nice like—"

"Like what?" queried Scott. "Fire ahead."

"I don't quite know, and I've thought and

thought. If it only was a little later in the fall we could go nutting."

"He wouldn't like that," said Scott. "Wonder if we couldn't do something up the canyon?"

"That's the very thing!" Helen brightened, "I have it now. Let's have a wiene roast up the canyon; you know, build a fire and roast them over it. How's that, Scott?"

"All right, if you have something to eat besides wienes. Fix up a dandy big lunch and let them be the spectacular part of the feast."

"I've been looking everywhere for you," cried Joan, coming round the side of the house. "What are you-all doing here? I can tell you are up to something. What's the conspiracy?"

"Helen has been cudgeling her brain for a celebration for Bill's last day, and I must say she has hit on something that sounds good to me."

"What do you think of a wiene roast up the canyon? I mean all of us, father and mother, besides Helen and Bill, you and me."

"Splendiferous," Joan said. "I must have had a presentiment you were going to have a picnic. I've been making purchases myself this morning."

"What kind of purchases?" asked Helen, eagerly.

"Oh, just what one needs for a picnic in the

woods, paper plates, napkins, and little paper containers for lemonade."

Scott gave a low whistle of appreciation and Helen threw her arms around her friend's neck.

"Joan Clayton, you are a jewel. You just foresee everything. Think of it, a whole picnic outfit! We'll have a wonderful time. Scott and Bill can make a fire and hunt up the right kind of saplings; they say the best come from the eucalyptus, and we'll stick the wienes through the long way, and they'll roast splendidly.

"Mustn't forget baked potatoes," interrupted Scott, "a wiene roast isn't complete without baked potatoes."

"It all sounds so good, my mouth waters already," said Joan. "You take your guitar, Helen, and I'll have my ukulele, so, after the feast, we can sit around the fire and sing and play. I can hear Bill's tenor now."

When the plans for the trip up the canyon were submitted to Mr. and Mrs. Monroe, there was a moment's hesitation as the latter felt very timid about the sharp curves of the canyon road. But as Scott assured her that he would be very careful, she reluctantly gave her consent. It was decided to start shortly after luncheon which, as Helen argued, would give the afternoon for exploring the canyon.

"We can have the wiene roast about five o'clock, and don't forget, mother, about the potatoes and dill pickles, they're absolutely in-dis-pens-a-ble, as Bobbie used to say."

Nothing was forgotten, the ukulele and guitar being stowed safely under the seat, with plenty of warm wraps and rugs to spread on the ground so no one could take cold. All were in high spirits, although, just before starting, Mr. Monroe consulted his barometer and remarked rather anxiously,

"If we were back in New York, I would think there was going to be a thunder storm. It's unusually warm and looks very much like it."

"It never rains this time of year in California," Helen declared.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Monroe tucked in her husband's big raincoat, reflecting it would do no harm to carry it anyway.

The ride was a pleasant one. For some distance up, the canyon road was bordered by picturesque homes. Some were pretentious, with wide spreading lawns and gardens, others were pretty bungalows, while occasionally, they were surprised at catching sight of a real Swiss chalet, perched high on the steep mountain side.

"And there are actually big stones on the roofs

like the ones we see in pictures of the Alps," Joan cried, delightedly.

The arroyo was almost dry and trickled in a tiny stream at the bottom of the canyon. Above their heads stretched towering eucalyptus trees. As they wound farther up, there were fewer houses, the road growing steeper, and the curves more dangerous. Once they were startled as an automobile whizzed around the corner just ahead of them, giving them barely space to pass in the narrow road. Scott's lips were tightly compressed, and Helen repressed a frightened scream. Altogether, they felt relieved when they finally reached a little clearing where some flat stones and a fallen log made it seem especially desirable for a picnic.

They laid the rugs on the ground under the trees and prepared to enjoy themselves. Mr. and Mrs. Monroe had brought one or two favorite books with the idea of reading aloud; Joan and Helen sat talking on the fallen log, while Scott and Bill wandered off in search of sage brush and twigs for the fire. It was very quiet and peaceful there, this unusually warm afternoon. Beyond, the great, strange trees, glimpses could be caught of the chaparral on the dry hills, and the silence was only broken by the trickling of the tiny brook or an occasional songbird.

After a little, the boys returned laden with dry branches for the fire and with saplings they had cut from the eucalyptus trees.

"Guess we've done all we can for a while," said Scott, as he threw down his burden, "we might as well take a climb. You girls seem to be enjoying yourselves, and Bill and I have our eye on that mountain top."

"Why can't we go, too?" asked Helen. Joan seconded her,

"Don't you think girls can climb, too?"

"If it wouldn't be too hard," was Scott's rather doubtful answer, looking at his companion, but Bill smiled at Helen.

"It's a pretty big pull, but no worse than we had that day at the mines. We could take it gradually and, if the girls should give out, we could come back. It isn't necessary to reach the top."

"We can do it, I'm sure," Joan answered, as the two of them scrambled from their places on the log. "Think what good appetites we shall have."

"Don't be too long," was Mrs. Monroe's parting admonition as she looked a little anxiously at the clouds.

"We won't, mother dear," Helen called back, "so don't you and father worry, but have a good

time with your book. We'll be back in plenty of time for the wienes."

It was fun at first, even though the sun was hot and the mountain sides rough. The girls talked gayly and walked bravely, stopping occasionally to admire the tall stalks of the yuccas with their bell-shaped flowers; but after a little, Helen, especially, began to lag. There was no ocean breeze that afternoon, and no friendly tree, under whose branches they could find shelter; only the low mesquite bushes broke the monotony.

"Say, now," suggested Bill, doubtfully, as they paused for breath, "hadn't we better go back? There isn't any use getting too tired."

But the remark only seemed to inspire the girls with fresh courage and they indignantly refused to consider such a proposition, both declaring their determination to reach the mountain's top.

"It would be foolish to stop," asserted Helen, "when we have come so far already. We can rest after a while."

"Besides," urged Joan, "it's worth the climb, to see the view. It's beautiful now, and what must it be from the top?"

They looked over the panorama of sea and land that spread out below them; to the west, beyond the lesser mountain peaks, the ocean ex-

tended, a sheet of blue to the far horizon. In the opposite direction, they could discern the tall buildings of Los Angeles, and in the nearer distance, Hollywood itself, the boulevard plainly defined, winding its ribbon like length at the foot of the mountain.

Then they climbed up, Scott and Bill lending what help they could to the girls, who, by the time they reached the summit, were in such a state of semi exhaustion, it was no wonder they did not at first notice that the view was obscured. At length, Joan cried in surprise:

"I can't see the ocean or the city. I believe we are actually above the clouds. I never knew that was possible, and the mountain peaks below us look like islands, with their heads barely showing."

It was no longer warm, and the wind was blowing; the young folks huddled close together and Helen's teeth chattered as she shivered forlornly,

"Why didn't I do as mother suggested and take my sweater?"

Bill happened to have a morning paper in his pocket and they crumpled it up, stuffing it up their sleeves and round their throats, in lieu of something better.

Soon there were rumblings of thunder and flashes of lightning in the clouds below them, and

they could tell it was raining in the valley. They were all frightened; Scott essayed to whistle "Alone on a mountain top," but he stopped abruptly, as he saw it was not a popular air, and exclaimed in a further effort to be cheerful,

"As far as I can see, we're fortunate anyway in being above the storm, although I never would have selected a mountain's top as a refuge at such a time."

As the storm continued the girls clung closer to each other, Helen giving little cries of terror as the lightning flashes came almost without intermission, but Joan did not utter a syllable; only an added firmness about the mouth, as the muscles tightened and the intensity of her expression betrayed her anxiety. The thought of Santa Barbara came to Scott's mind.

After what seemed to the watchers an interminable time, the clouds lightened, the flashes became fainter and the rumblings of thunder more distant. With distinct relief in his voice, Bill said,

"Shouldn't wonder if we could start down now. We don't want to run the risk of another storm coming up."

Their limbs were cold and cramped, and the descent proved harder in some ways than the ascent had been.

There were numberless stones that gave away as their feet touched them, threatening to throw them; but slipping and scrambling, holding on to each other they made their way. After a time, it was still worse for the mountain sides being wet and slippery from the recent rain, they were obliged to go more cautiously. The sky was beautiful above them, and a wonderful rainbow stretched across the heavens.

As they watched the glorious colors slowly fading, Joan felt as if she understood as she never had before its significance; a wave of thankfulness overwhelmed her. In the midst of the danger they had not been harmed.

Another short descent and they were in the canyon. The leaves were dripping with moisture and the swollen stream rushed madly in its bed. Soon they caught sight of their automobile among the trees and Mr. Monroe in his raincoat, picking his way over the wet underbrush and the gullies made by the storm.

Helen rushed to meet him, crying,

"Oh, father, father, hasn't it been a dreadful storm! Are you and mother all right?"

Joyfully he held out both hands to her then, seeing the others close behind,

"Are you actually safe?" he called. "We were well protected in the machine, but your

mother is almost beside herself with anxiety."

"Henry, Henry!" cried Mrs. Monroe, just then, leaning out from the car, "do you see anything of the children? It seems as if I couldn't endure this suspense another minute."

"Don't have to, mother, we are all here, safe and sound," answered Scott's strong young voice.

"Yes, and, mother dear, we're not a bit the worse for the rain," put in Helen; "in fact we are not even wet, for we weren't in the storm at all, but above it, actually above the clouds on the top of the mountain."

It was some time before Mrs. Monroe was actually convinced no harm had come to them. It almost seemed as if it was a miracle and they were obliged to repeat their story over and over again.

"It was perfectly wonderful to see the lightning flash and hear the thunder rumble in the clouds below us," said Joan, her face flushed with excitement.

"I never realized before how Noah must have felt when his ark rested on Mount Ararat," remarked Bill. "Pretty lonely kind of a place. You girls were plucky."

"How thoughtless I am," suddenly interrupted Mrs. Monroe; "you must all be hungry

and tired. Jump into the car and have some hot coffee and sandwiches."

"The suggestion of something hot sounds most awfully good to me," commented Scott, "but what about our wiene roast?"

"I'm afraid you'll find it quite impossible to build a fire," interposed his father. "Everything is wet. On the whole, you had better make up your minds to roast the wienes at home this time."

"In a chafing dish! That will be every bit as much fun," exclaimed Helen, who, as usual, was quick to spring at a new idea. "And we can have toasted crackers on the electric toaster, can't we, mummy?"

"Anything you wish," replied her mother, crumpling her napkin. "After this storm home will be a real haven of relief."

They found the canyon road in a dangerous condition from the recent rain, and Scott was obliged to take the utmost precaution as he rounded the slippery curves, but they reached the bungalow without mishap.

As the machine stopped in front of the house, Tako rushed out most unceremoniously, shocked out of his accustomed calm by anxiety about his masters and mistresses. After Mr. Monroe had assured him they were all safe, and Helen had explained that they had decided to have the pic-

nic at home, he hastened to the kitchen to put in the potatoes and boil the wienes.

Then the girls set the table as nearly as possible as they would have done in the woods, with paper tablecloth, napkins and plates, the only difference being that they placed the chafing dish at one end, and the toaster beside it. Helen was to tend the wienes and Joan to toast the crackers, and surely a merrier party never sat down to a feast in the woods than did they that evening in the cozy dining-room. How good the wienes smelled as they cooked, Scott thought, and how appetizing they looked as the girls took turns trying them with toothpicks to see if they were done.

"Isn't it too funny," cried Helen, "how we went up the canyon on purpose for a wiene roast and came back to 'Heart's Ease' after all? This has been a most unusual day, I must say."

"I don't believe there is anything in the world as delicious as wienes," said Joan, at the same time helping herself to her third dill pickle, and carefully buttering a toasted cracker.

"Especially when one has the best of sauce," was Mrs. Monroe's laughing response.

After the feast, they gathered round the fireplace in the living room, and Joan brought out her ukulele, and Helen, her guitar. They played one tune after another, while the boys

joined in singing their favorite, "California, California."

"I love you California,
You're the sweetest state of all;
I love you in the winter, summer, spring and in
the fall.
I love your fertile valleys, your mountains I
adore;
I love your grand old ocean and I love your
rugged shore."

Mrs. Monroe had already warned them it was time to break up for the evening, when Joan proposed a story.

"I mean the kind that one person starts and the next one takes up," and she straightway began, "Once upon a time, as the old books all say, there lived a certain knight, who went forth to seek adventures, and he was of great prowess and all he did was very good. And, by chance, it happened that he came across a company that, like the Canterbury pilgrims, were traveling through the country, and—" she paused dramatically, motioning to Bill to continue.

Somewhat embarrassed, he ejaculated,

"Oh, I say, you'll have to excuse me, you girls have more imagination than I have."

"I know," said Helen with an understanding glance at Joan. "And the valiant knight became their guide and led the pilgrims through dark places below the earth, where it is indeed dangerous, and after he had shown them wonderful treasures of gold and silver, brought them safely again to the surface."

"And this ended the first adventure, and the second is like unto it," said Scott, entering into the spirit of the tale. "And it came to pass there was still another adventure, upon a mountain top, and they were not harmed, although there was thunder and lightning upon the plains below."

"I can supply the next," said Bill, laughing. "And after the perils of the lightning, there was feasting in the hall and music and joy because no harm had come to the knight and his brave companions."

"Hear! Hear!" broke in Scott, and, after the merriment subsided, Joan concluded,

"So endeth the second adventure." She smiled at Helen dreaming beside the fire. "I'm too tired to think, and anyway, no one knows what the third adventure will be."

CHAPTER XIX

EXCITING NEWS

THE rest of the family had scattered on various errands, but Joan, pleading letter-writing as an excuse, had remained at home. This was Wednesday, and she had not yet answered Jack's letter, which she had received the Saturday before. He had written at length, telling her all about Mr. Porter's trip to New York with Lidy and her sister.

The plan all along had been to go in July, but the specialist had been away and had only just returned. It had turned out so happily that Joan's heart had been singing ever since. After a thorough examination of the child's eyes he had pronounced that the trouble was caused by a somewhat obscure disease of the retina. Jack had not been sure of the name, but promised to find out and give it to her in his next. The oculist had, moreover, advised an operation, which, though delicate, was not critical, and then careful treatment under his immediate care for at least two months. If all went well, he saw no

reason why, as the child grew older, her sight would not gradually strengthen.

He had besides, made the assertion that it was not at all strange that the trouble had not been understood by oculists before consulted as there had been great advances made of late along those lines and many diseases now yielded to treatment which had hitherto been considered hopeless. The child's age was greatly in her favor, of course.

There being no reason for delay, the operation had been performed the next day, after which Mr. Porter and Lidy had returned to Hillview, leaving Happy Day in the beautiful private hospital which was the specialist's particular pride.

After reading Jack's letter, Joan seated herself at her desk and began,

"Dear Jack:

"You were certainly good to go into so many details. I have a long afternoon before me and will try to imagine you are sitting here with me and we are—"

A sharp ring at the bell made her stop abruptly, and reflecting it was probably the postman, she hurried to the door, returning with a budget of letters and papers. Running hastily

through them, she found two for herself, one from Theo, postmarked the twentieth, and the other from her mother, evidently written and mailed the following day. Deciding to read them in their order, she opened the one from Theo.

"Sister Mine:

"Jack has written you about Happy Day and her trip to New York. Isn't it fine it turned out as it did, and the poor child will, without a particle of doubt, have her sight? So much for modern science.

"We are counting the days now when you will be home, less than a month, and you may be sure we will keep you talking a blue streak when once you are here. The mater says Bob is a perfect Baron Munchausen with his tales. I wish I might have been at the Studio Tea—it must have been a great affair, and I am sure you-all looked your prettiest and sweetest, and that always helps to make a success. From what you write, Bill must be splendid company. Can't you persuade him to come to Hillview sometime?

"I am wondering how it must seem in California, trying to imagine the different kinds of trees, and do tell me what a jacaranda is, but there, I mustn't write any longer now for I have

an engagement to play tennis at three. Only be sure of this, I am coming to California and see everything for myself. Good-by,

“THEO.”

“Yes,” reflected Joan, “they must all come to California some time.” Then she had a brilliant thought, “Why couldn’t Theo and mother spend next winter in Santa Barbara, and she and Jack keep house at home? It would do them both a world of good.”

Then she fell to dreaming of Santa Barbara and the charm of the peaceful Mission. Musing, she took up her mother’s letter and glanced over the first few lines, scarcely comprehending what they were about. Suddenly she started, as these words stared at her from the top of the second page,

“Pappy is dead!”

There must be some mistake, neither Jack nor Theo had mentioned Lidy’s father, but, no, there it was,

“I have a great deal to tell you to-day. First of all, Pappy is dead.” Then the letter went on.

“It all happened so suddenly, three days after Lidy returned from New York. He had been much interested in hearing what the doctor had said, asking over and over again, ‘an’ she’s goin’

ter see, my little pretty, goin' ter see?' Then, as Lidy repeated the doctor's statement, he had said, 'Maw 'ud be that glad.'

"The next morning, seemingly in his usual health, he started out for one of his rambles in the woods, 'jes' ter see ef the pawpaws ain't gittin' ripe,' he told Lidy.

"That was the last she saw of him until late that night, when Mr. Osgood brought him home in his car, having found him face downward, under one of the trees near the road that ran through the forest. Noticing a form stretched on the grass, he had stopped his car and gone to him. He would not have known who the man was had it not been for Jean who was with him, and who recognized him at once as Lidy's father, the man who could make such wonderful bird houses. Stooping over, he tried, vainly, to restore Pappy to consciousness, then lifting him into the machine, he had brought him to the little cabin.

"When the doctor came, he pronounced it a stroke of some kind, and gave little hope of his recovery. Pappy died the next day at noon, having regained consciousness only once about ten o'clock when Cousin John and Lidy were alone with him. Motioning Lidy to come to his bedside, and pointing to an old hair trunk in the

corner, he spoke, evidently with great effort, 'They're there, all uv 'em.'

"As Lidy questioned him, he hoarsely replied, 'Them papers as I got down in Tenn'see; you-uns are as good as enny. Maw allus wanted you-uns should be eddicated!'

"That was all, in another moment he was gone. The funeral took place the next day and Lidy, in her simple black dress, sat heart-broken by the pine coffin, while the minister pronounced the few last words. Poor child, he was all the father she had. After it was over, I insisted on her coming home with me. She will be here for the present, perhaps indefinitely. We must take care of the two waifs which fate has brought to our door."

Turning the pages, Joan read it all again, from the beginning. So Pappy was dead! She could not realize it and sat so absorbed in her thoughts that she did not hear the honk of the motor and started when Scott entered the room, with a cheerful,

"Hello, Joan. Dreaming? What is it all about?"

She turned, and, for a moment, did not answer, then all she said was,

"Oh, Scott!"

"What is it?" he repeated more gently, seating himself in the big chair at her side. "No bad news about the little girl, I hope."

"Not that," she answered, "but Pappy's dead."

"What, Pappy Clay? So the old fellow's gone? I couldn't help but like him after all, and there wasn't a thing he didn't know about the woods and animals. Great old chap!"

"Yes, but think of those two poor girls left all alone."

"Pretty hard lines, I admit, still I don't know as he was any special help to them. He was fond of them, although he had a funny way of showing it, going off months at a time and leaving them to shift for themselves. They're liable to get along better without him."

"I don't know but that is so. Mother has said more than once that she wanted to educate them, and now that Happy Day's eyes are going to be all right, we can do so much for both of them." Then she felt a great wave of sympathy for Lidy as she thought, "She can't help but miss him; I wish I could put my arms around her and comfort her."

While they were at breakfast the next day, came still more startling news from Jack. How bulky the letter was! She wondered, as she

opened it, what it could all be about. She hoped nothing dreadful had happened, and began reading it to herself.

"Dear Twin:

"I don't know what you will think when you hear the news I have to tell you. It's all true—I mean about the resemblance you always fancied between Lidy and the son the old gentleman disinherited."

She stopped with a gasp.

"What's the matter?" inquired Helen, really frightened, while Scott handed Joan a glass of water; "if you continue to have such exciting letters, we'll have to censor the mail. What has happened now?"

"Listen," said Joan, and she read,

"It's all true, I mean the resemblance you always fancied between Lidy and the son the old gentleman disinherited. I believe mother wrote you of some papers that Pappy referred to the last time he was conscious. Well, the day after the funeral, Lidy got them out of the trunk and gave them to Cousin John. Then he called us into the library, saying he thought we'd better all be together when he looked them over, and now

for the story, and see if you don't think truth is stranger than fiction.

"As far as I can get it all straight, it seems the last time Pappy went to Tennessee, he took pains to hunt up some old records and copied out dates and all."

"He was a smarter old chap than we thought," interrupted Scott, admiringly, but at Helen's impatient "hush" he subsided as Joan continued—

"The paper was mussed and torn from having been so long in Pappy's pocket. You know he was gone over five months that last time, but we could make it out without difficulty.

"Cousin John blessed his soul at least three times before he began to read aloud. First came the date of marriage of one Richard Clayton in August, 1835, only the name was scratched and Dick Clay substituted in its place. Who could that be but the son of Richard Hervey Clayton who, according to our own records, was driven from home, May 10th, 1835? Then came the mention of a son, Dick Clay, born the following year, and further down, his marriage and the birth of another Dick Clay, which, according to our records, must have been Pappy himself. His marriage to Elizabeth Golden is given, and be-

low that is written: born, Lydy Clay, and after mention of two other children who had evidently died, comes the name 'Lisbeth.

"We were puzzled at that until Lidy suddenly spoke up and said, 'Why, that's Happy Day. Ma used to call her Lisbeth sometimes, though she liked Happy Day better, 'cause she said she wanted she should always have Happy Days.'

"So now you have it all and can make of it what you can. Just what relation the two girls are to us is more than I can figure out."

"They're cousins, of course, and cousins to be proud of, too," said Joan, thoughtfully. "Oh, doesn't it seem pathetic to think of that proud young man cast out of his home and wandering down through those lonely Tennessee mountains, then changing his name, and marrying some mountain girl?"

"He couldn't have been very well contented," put in Scott, "for, if I remember rightly, you said it was known that he died abroad the next year. I must say it's an awful warning against dissipation. Think what his life might have been if he hadn't angered his father!"

"Oh, isn't it all romantic!" cried Helen, almost carried away by excitement. "I always knew it couldn't be true what your Cousin John thought,

that they were descended from some old jail bird of a Bill Clay who used to loaf around Hillview once upon a time. I always did think Pappy was a gentleman in the rough, every animal in the neighborhood was friendly with him to say nothing of the birds, and that shows he wasn't half bad. Once he helped me over a fence, and I declare neither you nor Jack could have been more courteous. As for Lidy, she has more brains than I have. I'm perfectly convinced of that by the way she got the red ink out of my traveling blouse when all I could do was to stand around and mourn over the calamity. I told her then I wanted her to spend a whole year with us, and, Joan, you must make it your special duty, to see that she does. Besides, mother, she does the best basket work of her whole class; oh, and Happy Day has the sweetest voice. You should have heard her sing the Christmas carols. I'm absolutely sure she has a career before her."

"You haven't heard quite all the letter," put in Joan, and as Helen composed herself to listen, she resumed.

"You should have been here, Joan, for I tell you it was exciting, Cousin John, wiping his eyes and blessing his soul at intervals, and Lidy, white as a sheet, repeating over and over, 'It can't be so,

no, it can't be so,' until the mater went over and kissed her and told her how we loved her and how we were going to make up to her for the hardships she had suffered. Right in the midst of it Margie came in and sat down by Lidy's side. Of course she didn't understand what it was all about, but after the mater had finished talking to Lidy, Margie reached out and took hold of her hand, saying in her soft little voice,

"'I love you and I love Happy Day, too.'

"Well, the upshot of it all is that Cousin John is going to-morrow 'down Tennessee way' as Pappy would have said, to look up the records and see that everything is straight, but of course it is, and to think, Joan, you were the one who first noticed Lidy's resemblance to that portrait we found stowed away in the attic."

By the time the letter was finished, Mrs. Monroe was crying and Mr. Monroe wiped his eyes and commented,

"A remarkable story, certainly, but those things do sometimes occur," while Joan, still dazed, went to her room to think it over.

Meantime, Mr. Porter was on his way to Tennessee. As Pappy had given the name of the little settlement in the Cumberland Mountains, he had no difficulty in finding how to reach

it. "By train to M—— and then the stage up the mountains," the ticket agent at Richmond had told him, at the same time giving him a questioning glance, as if he wondered what sort of business could take a man like Mr. Porter to such an out of the way place.

He met with other questioning glances before he reached his destination. As he climbed into the dilapidated stage at M——, the one other passenger, an old man, evidently a mountaineer, eyed him curiously at first and then questioned,

"Air it yer fust visit up these mountings?" Then, without waiting for a reply, continued, "I low as 'taint fine es it is down yander, but arter all, it's a toler'ble kind o' country. Air ye thinkin' o' runnin' a railrud through these here parts? 'Pears like it would be a diff'cult thing fur to do."

Mr. Porter having signified he had no such intention, asked his companion if he knew of any settlement near there by the name of Pine Top, and if there was a schoolhouse in the vicinity.

Delighted at this opportunity to supply information, the mountaineer replied,

"Wa-al ye-es, ye can jes' go along further up the mounting and kem down to'ther side or ye kin git off hyar and strike 'round through the

woods, fust ye'll see the cabins an' further on, the schoolhus."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Porter, and halting the stage he set out to make the rest of the way on foot, glad to be thus easily rid of his garrulous companion.

As he struck off through the woods, he drew a long breath of the exhilarating air; there was something fascinating to him about the mountains, the wilderness of pine trees, the laurel that bordered the trail, the sight of an eagle seen through the branches, the tinkle of a cow bell, 'mid the sassafras bushes, all made him think of Craddock's descriptions. There was a beauty in the beech shadows that surely could be found nowhere else.

He came across a mountaineer or two; a young fellow, who, with his fierce black eyes looked, in his homespun shirt, as if he might have stepped out of the pages of a book, and a girl with a face like a rose, under her faded blue calico sunbonnet, made him wonder if poor heart-wounded Richard Clayton had happened on a girl like that in the strange country.

After awhile, he came to the cabins which were pitiful apologies for homes, for the most part, and not far from them he found the old red brick schoolhouse. Next door was a small house, and

surmising it might be the home of the school master, he rapped at the door. It was opened almost instantly by a tall angular woman, who, on learning that he wished to examine the records, called her husband from the other room.

Both husband and wife were white-haired, and had been there many years. They had come on account of the woman's health, but had grown to love the mountains and had gradually given up all thought of returning. He had filled every office in the little settlement, including that of minister and schoolmaster.

On Mr. Porter's showing him the papers and asking for information, he took him over to the schoolhouse, talking as they went.

"I knew well the man you speak of as Pappy. In fact, it was my niece he married. It almost broke her aunt's heart. She was a pretty little thing who, after her mother's death, came to make her home with us. She used to help in the teaching, and she had a voice like a lark. It broke us all up when she married, as we always planned to send her away and give her a chance in the world, but she wouldn't give him up. They stayed here until after the child, 'Lisbeth, was born, then some strange fancy made him move away, and, though he had a habit of appearing from time to time, we could never find

out much about them, only that his wife had died, and the little girl was going blind. Think of the shiftless fellow having good blood in him! Surely the ways of the Lord are inscrutable. But come in and have dinner with us. My wife will want to talk it all over."

Mr. Porter was more than pleased to accept the invitation. After the simple meal was finished, he told them about Pappy Clay's death and all the Clayton family's plans for the children. Then he sat at the pine table and wrote Joan about his trip and the examination of the records, but particularly of what he had learned of the children's mother; how, doubtless, there had been some trace of finer instincts in poor, shiftless Pappy Clay that had appealed to the young wife who was so evidently his superior, and whose life had proved a tragedy. He added a postscript:

"My dear, there is one other thing to tell you. While it is true that Richard Henry Clayton cut his son absolutely off from his inheritance, there was a codicil to the will that in the event of there being found any heirs of said Richard Clayton, a sum of twenty thousand dollars be kept intact for their maintenance. That money has been untouched and shall be paid over as soon as the

children come of age. Until then a guardian must be appointed to handle it for them."

Joan was alone when she read the letter from Mr. Porter. She cried over the first part, and exclaimed in delight at the thought of the twenty thousand dollars. Why wasn't Scott or some one else there to whom she could tell the good news? But her fingers trembled as she addressed an envelope for the first time to her new cousin,

"Miss Lydia Clayton,

"Hillview, Virginia.

"Dear Cousin Lydia:

"I am so glad we are really and truly cousins, and that everything has come out all right. Give my love to 'Lisbeth, and tell her I hope she will have only happy days from now on,

"Affectionately,

"JOAN."

"P. S.—It won't be long before I shall be back in Hillview and what good times we will have!!"

CHAPTER XX

POSTCARDS AND SOUVENIRS

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" sighed Joan in despair, "what a bother it is to pack!" Her eyes rested lovingly on one treasure after another. "One thing is certain, I wouldn't want to leave a single thing behind me."

She was a picture in her dainty white cap, as she puckered her brows and bent her flushed face over her trunk. The room was in a state of picturesque confusion; her favorite skirts and blouses she had folded first of all and laid carefully in the trays; on the bed were piles of dainty lingerie, and three different boxes held her hats. How could she take them all? She lifted the covers to give them an affectionate glance: there was her cherished leghorn, with the dream of an ostrich plume, she must be careful not to spoil that; then the little toque Scott liked so much, although he persisted in designating the "stick-up" as a rooster feather; her becoming sailor and beach hat were in the same box, she couldn't possibly get along without either of them.

"Joan, Joan," came Helen's voice from the little hallway that separated the bedrooms, "where under the sun are you?"

"Here I am," was the answer, "having a dreadful time trying to pack. Do come and give me some advice."

Helen entered the room to find her contemplating three or four pairs of shoes.

"What can I do with them?" she demanded, dolefully. "And the worst of it is, these are not all. My patent leather pumps and high white boots are over there in bags, and there are ever so many other things just as perplexing. Look at the closet. I have scarcely started yet, and I've been working over an hour. I'll have to buy another trunk, that's all there is to it."

Helen went into one of her characteristic peals of laughter, at the same time opening her apron.

"I've brought another contribution. Here's at least three dozen of the biggest lemons you ever saw. Tako has been saving them for you."

"How perfectly fine! They'll make splendid pies. I can see them now covered with white frosting. Won't they weigh too much?"

"Never mind if they do. You can tuck them in the corners. They can't do any harm. I heard of a woman once who brought a can of molasses in her trunk."

"What happened?" inquired Joan, absently, forcing an extra fine lemon into a space she had suddenly discovered, reflecting as she did so, how it would delight Aunt Johnny's heart for afternoon tea.

"Exactly what you would expect, to be sure. The molasses oozed out and ruined her best gown."

"What a nice cheerful thing to tell me now. Have you seen Scott's kodak views? He mounted them himself. Where is that album? I'm sure I laid it on that table not more than a moment ago."

Both girls hunted frantically through piles of clothing, upturning much that was already packed, only to find the album in one of the bureau drawers where Joan suddenly remembered she had put it, thinking the table was too crowded.

Scott had taken a good deal of pains with his kodak views and had developed them himself. He had planned from the first to mount them for Joan as a reminder of her trip; on the outside he had printed in most artistic fashion, "A Summer in California," and had arranged the views in order. The two girls sat down on the floor in the midst of the confusion, the perplexities of the packing for the time, forgotten.

First came the group at Hillview; they were all there although the mother's face was so blurred that it was almost unrecognizable, and it was impossible to distinguish between Helen and Joan, but it was interesting anyway.

Turning a page or two, Helen cried, happily.

"This must be Great Salt Lake! Look at Scott himself serenely floating on the water. How I am squinting. That was because the sun must have been directly in my eyes."

"And my face is all screwed up from having swallowed some of that dreadful salt water. Cousin John must have snapped that one."

"Isn't this good?" Helen found a view of Eureka Hill, dotted with the hoisting works of the big mines. "I expect it was too dark underground to take a picture, but I would have liked to see how the ghostly procession looked all carrying candles."

"Here's that lovely spot by the lake at Tahoe," Joan put in. "There are half a dozen at least of San Francisco, the bay, and the Golden Gate and, yes, that's Bob watching the Chinaman putting the change in his ears. This is the only picture I have of your father." She held open a page for Helen to see a view of the canyon with Mr. and Mrs. Monroe under the trees and the

automobile standing near. "How I prize this book!"

Fully an hour slipped by, the girls happily chatting. There was scarcely a place they had visited or an experience they had had that the kodak views did not recall.

"It certainly was a great idea of Scott's to mount the pictures in that way, and I'm going to ask him to make an album exactly like it for me," exclaimed Helen, as they turned the last page.

"If you won't think me sentimental," Joan said, softly, "I'll show you my book of pressed flowers. There were so many lovely ones that were new to me I couldn't resist making a collection."

"Only a pansy blossom, only a faded flower," answered Helen, teasingly. "I wouldn't have thought of doing it myself, but let's see what you have."

"Well, first comes one of the columbines from Lake Tahoe; don't you remember how perfectly exquisite they were? And next," she hesitated a moment, "next is a nosegay the old monk gave me there at Santa Barbara."

Helen looked at her curiously. "I can understand about the columbine, because they are unusual, but I never would have thought of keep-

ing the flowers the funny old monk picked—but what is this?”

“That’s the magnolia blossom; it was so big I couldn’t get it all on the page, so I took one petal; and here’s some real true orange blossoms. I had to look ever so long before I could find them, and, oh, yes, two or three flowers we picked on the hill at Catalina, besides some acacia—and this is heliotrope from Miss Lottie’s garden; but I think the most of these sprays of seaweed, they are so graceful and smell of the ocean even now.”

“Oh, show me your postcards,” laughed Helen. “They appeal to me more than dried-up flowers.”

Joan put away her flower book. She knew Jack and Lidy would like it.

“I have literally dozens of picture postals, but do you know, I wish I had a few more. When I get home I am going to arrange them in some kind of a book and write underneath interesting things about each one.”

“That’s a good idea, and since I haven’t anything on earth to do, suppose I run down after lunch and get what else you want.”

“Oh, if you would,” was Joan’s grateful rejoinder. “I haven’t one thing of the ostriches, and Scott wasn’t there to take a snapshot. Margie would be so interested in seeing how they looked, and I would love to have one or two of the

San Gabriel Mission, you know; one showing the bells and another of the lovely old staircase. I don't see why I didn't get them myself."

With a parting word of advice, Helen departed to get ready for her trip, leaving Joan wrestling with her packing. She worked busily until twelve o'clock, and went at it again as soon as luncheon was over.

"Hello, there," suddenly sounded a voice under her window. Looking out she discovered Scott, dejectedly pacing back and forth. "Can't you take pity on a fellow and come for a ride? I hung around all morning trying to get a glimpse of you and you disappeared the moment lunch was over. I call it hard lines, especially as, by this time to-morrow, you'll be gone."

"Oh, Scott, how can I, when there's so much to do?"

"Let it go, don't disappoint a fellow. It's our last chance, Joan. They won't come for the trunk until to-morrow, will they?"

"No, but—"

"No buts, please."

"All right," she said, relenting. "Only we mustn't be gone but a very little while."

Fifteen minutes more and they were riding over the smooth roads she loved so much. Although it was September, there was not the

slightest hint of fall in the air; on the contrary, it was warmer than it had been all summer. Yet many of the people they passed had put aside summer clothes and were, it seemed, quite conspicuous in what were evidently new fall suits and coats.

"I don't see how these people tell when one season ends and another begins," remarked Joan to her companion. "If I lived in California I would wear pretty white dresses all the time."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," was Scott's laconic reply. "You'd want to be in the fashion as well as the rest of them. Furs with the thermometer at 60. Funny thing about fashions for girls."

By mutual consent they drove to the beaches, passing from one to the other, and stopped from time to time to watch the bathers, then on again, until they reached the high bluffs of Santa Monica. Leaving the car by the roadside, they sat for a while in the little park overlooking the water, until Joan caught sight of an old boat on the beach. It had evidently been left by the tide, and for a wonder had not been cleared away.

"Let's go and 'vest-gate' as Bob would say," suggested Joan, and like two children, hand in hand, they ran pell mell down the path to the beach.

"If it was only a real true wreck," said Scott, "we could play pirates and imagine ourselves cast up by the waves, but it would take more imagination, I fancy, than either you or I possess to make anything more out of this than a common ordinary rowboat that some one let go because it wasn't worth while taking the trouble to fasten it to its moorings."

"Never mind," Joan answered, "we can sit down on the sand and use its sides for a back." Then, suiting the action to the word, "It's ever so comfortable."

She took off her hat, the trim little toque Scott liked, and shook her hair to the ocean breezes.

"They say nothing tans as much as the wind off the salt water. I would like to go home as brown as an Indian and see what the folks would say. The trouble is it wears off too soon. I was all tanned up a month ago with real freckles on my arms and now they are almost all gone."

They sat for a while in silence; on the pier three or four fishermen were trying their luck for barracuda; gulls circled above the restless surf, and the waves rolled higher and higher on the beach.

It was Scott who spoke first.

"I say, Joan, I can't bear to think of your going home; fact is, I can't imagine how it will

seem here without you. There's lots of things we haven't done. We haven't gone up Mt. Lowe yet, to say nothing of other interesting places. Don't you suppose you could stay another week and we'd all motor to San Diego?"

Joan laughed at him.

"Stay! With my ticket bought and my Pullman berth engaged? Think what a commotion it would cause at home; besides, I'd have to go alone. Miss Lottie's work begins next week and you may be sure she would never consent to missing her first lessons." She was digging little holes in the sand and continued slowly, "I'm sorry to go, and I've had a glorious time, you-all have been perfectly lovely to me but—" her voice broke—"you know one can't play all the time, and it's time we were all going to work."

"That's the trouble," returned Scott. "I'm not a student, you know, the way you and Jack are, and I need you to keep me up to time."

"It won't be very long, just one year and we'll all be ready for college. I don't see why we shouldn't do as we have always planned, go somewhere together."

Scott looked sober. "I don't know, Joan, whether father will ever consent to my going East. It's so far away, and he isn't very well.

The trouble's with his heart and the doctor says he must be very careful, it might fail him all at once. The amount of it is, he wants both Helen and me to be somewhere near."

With a little quaver, Joan replied, "Your father has been so good to me, I can't bear to think of his not being well," suddenly her face cleared, "but I don't believe I'd worry, at least not very much. People often have heart trouble and live a long time; besides doesn't one get over everything in California?"

"So they say," he rejoined, "and we'll certainly hope it will be so in this case. I didn't mean to worry you, but only to explain why he feels as he does about my going East. Perhaps he wouldn't mind if it were Leland Stanford or Berkeley, only a day's ride from here."

Joan thoughtfully nodded, "Who knows, maybe Jack and I could come West. Don't you remember, Cousin John said he thought the California climate would be good for Jack?"

"That would be splendid, then you could spend vacations with us and we could go up Mt. Lowe and do everything we haven't done this time." His face fell again. "If it only wasn't a whole year." Then, eagerly, "But you will write, won't you, Joan?"

"Yes, indeed, every single thing and I shall

want to know exactly what you and Helen are doing."

By this time the sun, like a big golden ball, had dropped into the ocean and the waves were dancing in the radiance of the afterglow. It would soon be dark, for twilight is not long in California.

Beginning to realize it was late, Joan shook the sand from her skirts and rose with a reminder that it was high time they were thinking about home. "Helen won't like it one bit, I know, for she must be back long before this. She went in town on purpose for me; then, besides, there's the packing, and it's most dinner time."

Helen was standing in the pergola eagerly scanning every passing car.

"Why didn't you tell me you were going off with Scott the whole afternoon and I wouldn't have hurried," she said, and without waiting for Joan to explain, she dragged her into her room talking in her usual animated way.

"I've come across the loveliest postcards and I bought ever so many more than you told me to, and do come and see what I've found for some of the folks."

"Oh, you extravagant girl," exclaimed Joan. "What have you been buying now?"

"Nothing, just an embroidered waist pattern. It's pale pink and will be becoming to Theo, and I simply couldn't resist getting a Satsuma vase for your mother. You remember I wanted to buy one in San Francisco and this is ever so much more perfect. Don't you think she will be pleased? And here is a Japanese parasol for Margie; it takes so little to make her happy."

"They are lovely, of course, but how can I pack the vase? My trunk is full to bursting already, and I wouldn't have it broken for anything."

"We'll get it in some way, don't you worry; stuff stockings around it so it can't possibly break." She paused a moment to admire all over again, then impulsively threw her arms around Joan's neck. "How I am ever going to get along without you, Joan Clayton, I absolute-ly can't see. Bill's gone, and now you're going," and her voice trailed off disconsolately.

Just then the dinner bell rang and the girls hastened to smooth their roughened hair before going into the dining-room.

The conversation at the table was somewhat strained and desultory; the consciousness that it was Joan's last night cast a shadow over the usually merry group.

"How did you get along with your packing?" at length asked Mrs. Monroe.

"Not very well, I'm afraid, but I'll try and finish after dinner," answered Joan, coloring.

"It was my fault," confessed Helen. "I hindered her all morning."

"And I must own up, mother, to have hindered her all afternoon," said Scott. "I had to beg awfully hard before I could persuade her to go in the auto with me."

"Perhaps you would like a little help," continued Mrs. Monroe. "I have had so much experience, I know just how to go about it."

Joan gave her a grateful look; she was still anxious about the Satsuma vase.

"Please, mummy darling," Helen answered for her. "And then we'll have time for some last music."

"Don't say 'last,' " protested Scott. "Joan's coming back. She promised me she would with Jack."

He smiled down at Joan with an air of proprietorship, and Mr. Monroe caught the look.

"Do you constitute yourself Joan's special guardian?" he asked, teasingly. "Jack might resent that, I imagine."

"I don't care, just as long as she comes back," declared Scott.

CHAPTER XXI

HOMeward BOUND

It was the last moment. In the hall below, Scott had called several times for Joan to hurry. Mr. Monroe said the clock was fifteen minutes slow and still Joan lingered in the room where she had been so happy.

For half an hour before breakfast, she had been gathering flowers in the garden with Helen. It seemed as if they could not talk enough of all the wonderful things that had happened since the day when they had left Hillview. Then, while they were at breakfast, Miss Lottie had come in, just one bundle of nerves over the excitement of the departure. She was out in the machine now with Mrs. Monroe and the impatient honk, honk of the siren sounded every now and then.

"Don't forget your flowers that Scott got. He'd never forgive you," Helen said. "Doesn't he look funny and disconsolate? I do hope that you and Jack will come back to school here. I wish I were half as clever as you are, Joan. I

know that I never could keep up with the boys at college."

"Oh, yes, you could if you just thought so," responded Joan. "There goes the horn again. Good-by, you dear old room. Every time you come in here, Helen, I hope my ghost will give you a tap on the shoulder to make you remember all the good times we've had together."

They ran down the stairs and out to the machine. For once, Scott had a chance to run the car up to the speed limit. They were just in time to check the trunks. Joan saw them as they passed by, wheeled out on the last load, and it gave her her first thrill of real home coming. Miss Lottie had had hers, marked, "With Care" in large black letters, "Miss Charlotte Baldwin" "New York City." Joan knew when she saw it, all that it signified. It was quite as if some crusader of old had stamped the goal of his pilgrimage upon his shield.

"Don't forget me," Scott said, as the conductor called, "All Aboard." He had been ever so patient during all the farewells. Helen was still calling messages from the platform and Mr. Monroe had pressed a small purse in Miss Lottie's hand and a little box into Joan's.

"This is for pin money," he said, smilingly; "and this, so that you won't forget us, Joan."

As Joan turned back into the car, she found Scott putting the two suit cases up into the rack, and on one seat was a beautiful basket of California grapes. There were ever so many things he had intended to say to Joan, but now there was only time for a pressure of the hand, and a parting admonition.

"Remember now, tell Jack, it's Berkeley or Stanford." He was gone before she could even reply, and the train began to move. As there was no observation car, all Joan could do was wave a last good-by from the window.

There was a queer lump in her throat as the little group on the platform faded away. She buried her face in the flowers that had come from "Heart's Ease," so that Miss Lottie could not see the tears in her eyes, and then she thought what on earth was the matter, when she was going home, and Jack was to meet her in Chicago. If only she could have been in two places at once.

Miss Lottie had opened the little silver mesh purse and her eyes were shining with happiness.

"Just look, Joan," she said. "Life has seemed like a fairy tale, ever since you and Scott found me under my umbrella."

In her hand were ten glistening five-dollar gold pieces, Mr. Monroe's last gift, and Joan sud-

denly remembered the little box she had tucked in her hand bag. As she opened it, she gave a quick gasp of pleasure. On the creamy satin, lay a watch bracelet with gold extension links.

"Whatever made him think of it!" she cried as she fastened it on her wrist. "It is just what I have always wanted, and I didn't have a chance to half thank him for it."

Before they had gone many miles, the feeling of regret had begun to wear off, and they were already looking forward to the journey's end.

"I've never been to New York," Joan remarked. "The very next time Cousin John goes there on a business trip, I'll coax him to take me with him. You know, it's so queer, Miss Lottie, since I've been to California, everything seems possible. I do hope you can come to Hillview for Thanksgiving, even if you must spend Christmas up in the Catskills. Virginia is as lovely as California. And in another month the woods will be gorgeous with the changing leaves. I know you will love Hillview with its big lawns and wide verandas. We have our own horses, you know, and you must learn to ride, and oh, just wait, till you taste Nannie's plum pudding."

All the way across California, Joan was on the lookout for a last glimpse of familiar spots. First came Riverside Inn and Rubidoux Moun-

tain. Scott had told her, how in the time of the Mission Fathers a lookout had been posted on the mountain side and a bell hung so that if any danger was discovered a warning might be sounded.

Then came miles of orange groves, beautiful even at this season of the year. Joan wondered what they must be like in the spring, when the trees were loaded with blossoms. Finally, even the orange groves were far apart, and only an occasional pepper tree or lonely palm served as a reminder of the beautiful country they were leaving behind.

Nearer drew the desert with its wastes of sand. Far in the distance loomed fantastic shapes of cacti. Joan thought they looked like Don Quixote's windmills. It only needed the spectral shape of Rozinante and Sancho Panza on the little donkey to make it realistic.

Miss Lottie said it was time for them to go into the dining car, and Joan glanced at her little wristwatch. There was another tug at her heartstrings. They were all eating dinner now, at the little bungalow, Scott, Helen, Mrs. Monroe and at the head of the table, the smiling, genial face of the father, with Tako serving, and they were all talking of Miss Lottie and herself, Joan felt sure of that.

The people in the next section were saying

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that they had reached the State boundary line. Joan could not bear even to look out of the window. She bowed her face over Scott's flowers, realizing, too well, that her California Summer was at an end, and yet, ahead, lay the joy of seeing Jack in Chicago, and the hope of the future when they might all be re-united in this land of blossoms during their college days.

THE END



